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W. Childs Engr.

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Faithfully Yours
George Cockton

THE STEWARD:

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

BY HENRY COCKTON.

AUTHOR OF "SYLVESTER SOUND," "THE SOMNAMBULIST," "THE
LOVE MATCH," "VALENTINE VOX, ETC."

With Portrait of the Author, and Twenty-two Illustrations on Steel,
by Onwhyn.

LONDON:

W. M. CLARK, 16 & 17, WARWICK LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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etc.

TO VIRU
AIRBORNE

P. P. THOMS, PRINTER, WARWICK SQUARE.

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

- PART I.**—Corney discovering George at his Devotions.
The Widow overpowered by Sir John's Declaration.
D'Almaine introducing George into Congenial Society.
The Widow objects to part with Juliana.
- PART II** —The unexpected Visitor.
The Confession.
Corney discovers that he has been Robbed.
The Day is named.
- PART III.**—Corney's Portrait Framed and Glazed.
Freeman's Attack on George.
The Letter.
The Forced Rejection.
- PART IV.**—The Deed.
The Conscience-Stricken.
The Intelligence.
The Suppliant.
- PART V.**—Corney Confesses he's a Courtin'.
George's Emotion at witnessing the Death of Lejeune.
Aunt Ann objects to Corney's going to Foreign Parts.
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PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

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Cockton, Henry

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THE
STEWARD

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE



CORNER discovering George at his devotions!

J. Onwhym del.

BY

Henry Cockton

London. Pub^d by C. M. J. Clark, 17, Strand, W.C. Lane



The Widow overpowered by Sir John's declaration

TO VINH
AIRPORT LAO





Almaire introducing George into Congregational Society



The Widow objects to part with Juliana

TO THE
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THE STEWARD:

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE INTRODUCTION.

THE true character of an Old English Gentleman was never sustained better than by Sir John Fitzgerald Croly, Knight, of Croly Hall, Suffolk. He lived on his estate, which was worth between four and five thousand a-year; and, while his judgment, local position, and general influence, commanded the respect of the wealthy, his mercy as a magistrate, combined with his exuberant generosity as a man, very naturally endeared him to the poor.

Sir John had two sons,—the brothers, whose history we are now about to trace,—the name of the elder being George, and that of the younger Charles. Charles was all life and animation, full of health and manly vigour, as amiable and as generous in disposition as Sir John himself; but George was a hypocrite—a heartless hypocrite, wrapped in the cloak of religion. He was originally intended for the church, and had constantly expressed the most earnest desire to return to the University with the view of being ordained; but Sir John, who had discovered his real character, and who had compelled him to leave the University because he could trust him in Cambridge no longer, discountenanced that which he most sincerely felt would be an awful desecration.

"I know you," said he, on the last occasion on which this subject was reverted to; "I know you, George, better than you know yourself; but you have sufficient knowledge of yourself to know that religion with you is but a mask."

"Why should I wear it?" demanded George.

"To deceive!—to deceive, sir!" replied Sir John. "But you need not even hope to deceive me."

"I have no wish to deceive you," said George; "and if my conduct has not been at all times strictly irreproachable—"

"If your conduct has not been at all times strictly irreproachable, sir! What do you mean? You, whose fraudulently contracted debts

I have paid a dozen times—you, whom I have twice saved from transportation—you, whose vices and crimes, whose frauds and forgeries caused the premature death of your too fond mother, who was so infatuated that her love for you increased in proportion as your title to her affection diminished—you presume to say, as if it were a mere hypothesis, ‘if your conduct has not been at all times strictly irreproachable!’ Can you imagine for one moment that I have forgotten these things? I promised her, whose death you so heartlessly accelerated, that I would not reveal them, nor will I; but I cannot forget them; I cannot forget.”

“Nor forgive,” rejoined George, “nor forgive, like a christian: nor will you admit that a man may repent.”

“God forbid that I should not admit that,” said Sir John. “Could I believe that you had repented, not a syllable, having reference to the past, should ever again escape my lips; but repentance is a virtue of which you have no practical knowledge; under that very mask, which you artfully ask me why you should wear, your conduct—your general conduct now is just as *irreproachable* as ever! You may imagine that, because my fatherly pride has prompted me to invest you nominally with the Stewardship of my estate, I confide in your judgment and integrity! I have not the slightest confidence in either. I have watched you with the eye of a lynx, and you have succeeded in inspiring the conviction that I have a dishonorable, heartless son: a son who prays with fervour only, when he prays for his father’s death!”

“You wrong me,” said George, with an affected sigh; “but I must bear all meekly. My feelings must be wounded still: still must I in silence endure persecution, though it rend my very heartstrings. Yet will I once more appeal to you. Will you consent to my attaining the only dearly cherished object I have on earth?”

“Your ordination!” cried Sir John. “God forbid! I do not pretend, George, to know your real motive; but I feel convinced that you have some deep design, therefore, never revert to the subject again.”

Neither of this, nor of any other conversation of a similar character, had Charles the slightest knowledge. He was studying for the bar, and resided principally in Town; and although, when at home, he could not but observe a marked coolness existing between Sir John and George; he ascribed it, on the one hand, to the fact of their always living together, and, on the other, to George’s characteristic taciturnity.

There was, however, one who was not acquainted with the nature and substance of these conversations, and that was Cornelius Craske, commonly called Corney Craske, the son of one of Sir John’s oldest tenants. Corney, whose father held but a small occupation, not more than forty acres, with scarcely sufficient capital to work that, had been sent to school by Sir John, and subsequently taken into his service. He was the most especial favourite of George, for he would never appear either to see or to know of any of George’s delinquencies. It is true he watched him narrowly; but George had no conception of that:—it is also true that, by virtue of listening, he had acquired a knowledge of all those transactions which Sir John and George were equally anxious

to conceal; but, as he never breathed a syllable on the subject to any one but his father, they could have no suspicion that those transactions were not to him unknown. To his father he communicated all that transpired. Secrets he was able to keep from all the world but him: he hoarded them in *his* breast as misers hoard their gold, in the full conviction of security; and, as he overheard the whole of the conversation just recorded, he went to him with the view of making another deposit.

"Well Dad," said he, as he entered, "and how goes it now?"

"Oh! middlin', Corney, middlin'," replied the old man. "How are yow, and how do they find 'emselves up at the Hall?"

"All right but two on 'em: they don't feel right. There's been such a mortal kick up again this morning."

"What about, Corney, eh, what about?"

"The old game again! One wants to be a parson, and the other won't have it."

"Oh, Sir John and Mr. George! Ah, I see. Well, I on'y know one thing and that ain't two, if I was Sir John, and I found his mind right on 'terminated, I wouldn't stand out a mite longer."

"Well, he'd make a regular beauty of a parson no doubt;—here, a man who's been twice saved from transportation!"

"On'y once, Corney; come, come, on'y once. Don't make him a single mite worse than he is."

"I tell you *twice* he's been saved! Sir John said so to-day."

"But not afore yow, Corney?—not afore yow?"

"No; but he told him, and I heard it all. I *thought* there was going to be sussen up fresh so I planted myself at my old post again."

"Ah, the keyhole, Corney; I'm mortal afeared o' that old post o' yourn. I doubt, Corney bor, yow'l be catched one o' these times, and if yow be, down goes yar castle. But is this a fresh case o' forgery then?"

"No, it seems to be an old un; but Sir John told him flat he'd saved him twice."

"Well, Coney bor, all I can say is, know nothin'. Let what yow know go along o' what yow don know; that's the way to get on, bor:—know nothin'. I know'd a man as made heaps o' money by knowin' nothin'. They chose him on the old corporation, and when they went to tell him they'd chose him, says he, 'I can't sarve.' 'Why not?' says they. 'Cause,' says he, 'I know nothin'!' 'Then,' says they, 'yar the very man we want!' So they had him in, and by knowin' nothin' he purty well feathered his nest."

"And who knows," said Corney, "I shan't feather mine. If it should by-and-by be known that I know all, they may make it answer *my* purpose then to know nothing."

"It answers your purpose to know nothin' now," returned Craske. "It's yar bread. Whatever Mr. George does, ain't nothin' to do along o' yow. All yow have to do is to pick up yur crumbs and know nothin'. If yow lose yar bread, bor, through knowin' what you know, yow'll never get it again by tellin' others. Take my advice, bor, an' do

yar duty, an' when yow've done that yow've done all; an' whatever yow know, bor, about Mr. George, be sure that yow never know nothin'.

This was certainly very good advice, but it did not go far enough for Corney: he had an impression that the knowledge he had acquired might, eventually, be made available, and with this impression he returned.

CHAPTER II.

LEJEUNE'S FIRST VISIT TO THE HALL.

THAT there exists a strong prejudice against members of the legal profession generally, is a fact which may be held to be indisputable: that the great majority of them are supposed by the community at large to be actuated by no other principle than that of self-interest, is also an incontrovertible truth: but how strong soever this prejudice may be—however deeply rooted the conviction that chicanery and dishonour form their general characteristics—it may here be recorded that even slander never breathed upon the bright reputation of Mr. Lejeune, under whose immediate guidance Charles studied for the bar.

Taught in early youth to depend upon his own exertions, he had raised himself by diligence and probity to eminence; but being not only intellectual and eloquent, but high-minded, amiable, and just, he sought not, and therefore omitted to gain, those honours which are usually conferred upon men whose motives are not quite so stubbornly pure.

Contemning the heartless cunning, the subtle jugglery, practised by the majority of those with whom he came in contact, he early resolved on the pursuit of one course, and from that he never swerved. He would never consent to advocate the cause of an oppressor, but was ever ready to vindicate that of the oppressed. There were many by whom he was surrounded, who cared not whom they ruined if they could but ensure the success of their clients, however tyrannous or vicious those clients might be: there were many who held it to be their duty to pursue any prescribed course, no matter what misery they might thereby entail upon the innocent; but he could never be tempted to conduct any cause which he did not believe to be perfectly just; nor did he ever fail, when wealthy villains sought the destruction of the comparatively helpless, to thunder the naked truth into their unwilling ears.

But although, while performing his public duty, he would make the court ring with his indignant eloquence—in private he was mild and unassuming in the extreme. He had been called upon to endure much mental affliction. He married early to a lady of great personal beauty and rare accomplishments, whom he tenderly loved, and who was attached to him devotedly. Four daughters were the fruit of this mar-

riage; but while giving birth to the fourth, it pleased God to take her to himself.

This, to Lejeune, was a heavy blow indeed, and for some time his reason appeared to have deserted him; but he eventually rallied. He had his children still; and as they grew up in semblance of her who gave them birth, his fortitude and resignation strengthened as they grew, until he became comparatively happy.

At the age of eighteen, however, one of them died: a few weeks elapsed, and another followed—and in less than three months from that period, a third was called away; thus leaving him but one upon earth to claim his affection—and that one so delicate that he scarcely expected that even she would be spared. Gradually, however, by virtue of care and skill, the symptoms which immediately preceded the death of her sisters disappeared, and at the age of twenty-one, Juliana, although delicate still, enjoyed sufficient health to cause him to banish his fears.

Now, at this particular period, Sir John pressingly invited Lejeune and Juliana to spend a month at the Hall; and as this was well-timed—it being just at the commencement of the long vacation—Lejeune, ever anxious for Juliana to have a change of scene, accepted the invitation, and when the preliminaries for their departure had been arranged, they posted to the Hall accompanied by Charles.

On their arrival Sir John received them with all the warmth of pure friendship, and when he had sufficiently expressed the pleasure he really felt, he introduced Juliana to the Widow Wardle, his house-keeper, of whom she had heard much, and whom the reader will be better acquainted with anon.

"Now, dear," said the Widow, with an affectionate expression, which at once won the heart of Juliana, "*come with me: I'll endeavour to make you so happy!*"

"Stop," said Charles playfully: "Miss Lejeune, you must not believe anything Mrs. Wardle may say about me."

"Indeed," said Juliana, with a gentle smile, "I feel already that I must!—you expect me to hear that, like other young people, although you conduct yourself admirably abroad, you are very, very naughty at home!"

"He's a sad dog, a sad dog," interposed Sir John, as Juliana took the widow's arm and retired: "but come," he added, "come, let us have a glass of wine. Mr. Lejeune," he continued, as he again grasped his hand, "I am happy to see you, and the only request I have to make is, that while you are here you will consider yourself at home. Now, Charles my boy, pass that bottle."

Having had a glass of wine, they took a stroll round the garden, the extent and beauty of which quite astonished Lejeune; while Juliana, delighted with the elegant manners and affectionate solicitude of the Widow, went with her from room to room, admiring every thing she saw; and certainly the taste displayed justified her highest admiration.

At six precisely dinner was announced, and the party, consisting of Sir John, Mr. Lejeune, Charles, George, Juliana, and the Widow, sat down to a most unique banquet.

During dinner George scarcely uttered a word. He was dressed in a peculiarly formal style, while his manners and neckcloth were equally stiff. Charles, on the contrary, chatted with all: he moreover delighted all but George; and as Sir John was in excellent spirits, while Lejeune and Juliana were highly pleased with their reception, every thing passed off gaily.

"Well," said Sir John, when the cloth had been removed, "I suppose, Charles, you have made up your mind to be the Lord High Chancellor of England?"

"Of course," replied Charles, "what can be more natural? The odds against me can't be very great, seeing that the number of candidates for the office is so *small*! But perhaps you would be satisfied if I were only Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench, or the mere Chief Baron of the Exchequer? Any berth of that sort would satisfy me; I'm not at all ambitious."

"Oh! either would do," rejoined Sir John.

"Well, suppose then we say the Chief Baron at once. Perhaps I'd better get measured for my wig, to begin with? I may receive the appointment when I little expect it!"

"I never yet heard of such a case," said Lejeune. "Very little experience will show that you'll expect much more than you'll get. I would, nevertheless, hold up the honours of a profession to every member and every student: they tend to inspire emulation, without which eminence can never be attained. I don't believe that there ever was a man who unexpectedly received any legal appointment."

"I don't suppose there ever was," said Sir John; "but how do you get on with your elocution, Charles? are you able to make a tidy speech yet?"

"A tidy speech?" replied Charles; "you should hear me! But then you've no idea of the practice I've had. I'm at it every morning. Immediately on leaping out of bed, I convert my chamber into the court. I stick that old portrait of yours before the glass, and there's my lord staring me full in the face. On my right I establish a row of boots—these are the gentlemen of the jury: on my left is the cupboard, or witness-box; while on the cane-bottomed chairs before me are seated a lot of my learned friends. Well, I conceive the case opened. It's an action for anything—say, for breach of promise—and then I begin. If I'm for the plaintiff, of course I pile up the pathetic: if for the defendant, I reduce the thing at once to a mere bagatelle. For the plaintiff, I describe in tones and strains which bring tears into the eyes of the row of boots—I mean the intelligent gentlemen of the jury—how firmly, how fondly, how passionately she loved the recreant, base, and black-hearted defendant. If for him, I transfer her affection to his pocket, and undertake to show that she never loved him at all. And I'm as likely to be right in the one case as in the other; for how can I tell whether she loved him or not? In a case of this kind, however, give me the plaintiff. I see a tear starting in every eye: I hear the ladies sighing and sobbing around me—and while the intelligent gentlemen of the jury are blowing their noses with unexampled violence,

lest it should be thought that they could shed a tear, I behold the judge working his facial muscles and screwing up his mouth into all sorts of shapes, as if from the depths of his emotion he would say 'I'll tell you what it is: I can't stand this much longer.' This will strike into your rural mind an idea of the deep sensation I create, and yet you ask if I am able to make a *tidy* speech! Were Demosthenes himself to rise again, he would never, in my bedroom, beat me."

The style in which this was delivered, was of a character so facetious, that it convulsed them all with laughter; but that which seriously pleased Sir John most, was the fact of Charles having preserved "that old portrait."

"He'll do!" he exclaimed; "Mrs. Wardle! he'll do!"

"Do?" echoed Charles; "I don't know that I ought to be satisfied with the office of Chief Baron."

"What a powerful effect eloquence has!" observed the Widow.

"It is the very soul of the profession," said Lejeune.

"Why!" cried Sir John, "Mrs. Wardle! why even you will want to take a few lessons on elocution after this!"

"I shall be most happy to do so," returned the Widow with a smile. "I fear the majority of us do not sufficiently cultivate the art of speaking well, although it is an art which we are daily and hourly called upon to exercise. The influence of a graceful delivery is conspicuous in every sphere: it commands attention—it creates admiration—and while its power is pleasing to those who feel themselves bound to attend, it invests those by whom the accomplishment has been acquired with an unaffected air of superiority. We see its effect in every position in which we may be placed, and in every occupation in which we may be engaged: we see its effect upon children, who are charmed by a graceful delivery, while the impression made upon them is lasting: we see its effect in portraying present pleasure and prospective happiness, and in defending ourselves and others from the calumnies of the envious: in short, we almost hourly see its effects in our common intercourse with society, both upon strangers and upon friends; and yet, despite the advantages with which it manifestly teems, the art of speaking well has been generally so neglected, that comparatively few are able to enforce their views even in private circles, when they feel that all around are attending to what they say, without feeling so nervous and confused as to be unable to say what they wish to say, or to control what they really do say, if indeed they know what they are saying at the time. In a professional point of view, it is more important still. In the pulpit, for example, how great are its effects? and how highly its value should be appreciated? But as the power of persuasion consists chiefly in delivery, and as neither the sensation created at the time, nor the impression that may be subsequently felt, depends upon what is said so much as upon the manner of saying it, its influence is equally felt in promulgating sacred truths from the pulpit, and in proving guilt or innocence at the bar. I feel," she added, "that I ought not to have spoken on this subject in the presence of Mr. Lejeune, but I hope that I have proved that I appreciate its importance and

that therefore *I shall* be extremely happy to receive a few lessons from Mr. Charles."

"That's rich," said Charles; "conspicuously rich. I shall want a few lessons from you."

"You have had one already," observed Juliana.

"Very well! Then we'll call this the first of the series."

"I perfectly agree with you, madam," said Lejeune; "the art of speaking well is *not* sufficiently cultivated."

"Well," interposed Sir John, slyly, "if we grant that it might with advantage be cultivated more extensively among men, there surely can exist no necessity for teaching that art to the ladies!"

"These gentlemen," said the Widow, addressing Juliana, "are going to be very severe upon us now. I therefore think, dear, we had better withdraw from the contest."

"I think," said Juliana, with a smile, "that we shall leave one advocate at least."

"Yes, dear," said the Widow, "we shall leave an advocate; but we don't know which side he will take."

"Very true," returned Juliana, "but he must in our absence consider himself retained for the defendants."

They then retired, and Lejeune immediately afterwards, turning to Sir John, said, "that's a clever woman—a very clever woman."

"Mrs. Wardle, you mean. Yes, she has the reputation of being one of the most intellectual women in the county."

"If she do not deserve that reputation," said Lejeune, "the county must possess some rare specimens of intelligence. Is she at all related to you?"

"Oh! not at all. She is the daughter of a clergyman, the widow of a clergyman, and the mother of a clergyman, her son having just been ordained."

"Has she lived with you long?"

"Between three and four years. She came soon after the death of poor Wardle—an amiable, honourable, upright man, if ever there were one on earth. He was our incumbent: he also acted as my steward; for, having no private property, he found an additional two hundred a-year come in well. But of course I never regarded him but as a friend, and as a friend he was most sincere. Poor Wardle! I shall never forget the fervour, the intense thrilling fervour with which he seized my hand just before he expired, on hearing me say that I would take care of *her*. He could not speak: he tried, and failed—but his gaze was sufficiently eloquent for me. But, come," he added, unable to conceal his emotion, "Charles, pass the bottle: we'll drink to his memory."

George at this moment applied his handkerchief to his eyes, and really appeared to weep.

"Well," said Sir John, having recovered himself, "have you young gentlemen *nothing* to say?"

"Yes, said Charles, "I have. I have to propose to you the health of one whose character corresponds with that of him whose memory we

have just drank in silence. I know him to be amiable: I know him to be honourable. I could—but in his presence I will not say more, knowing that to a man of his acute sensibility, it is sometimes painful to be praised. I'll therefore simply give you health and prosperity to one of my best friends, Mr. Lejeune."

"Sir John, and gentlemen," said Mr. Lejeune, when the toast had been duly honoured, "I thank you sincerely for the compliment you have paid me. My friend Charles has ever commanded my esteem, and in proposing health and happiness to you, Sir John, I beg to assure you that your friendship is an honour which I hope throughout life to enjoy."

"Mr. Lejeune," replied Sir John, "I am proud to hear that my boy has succeeded in winning the esteem of one so well able to appreciate those gentlemanly feelings which are the germs of true nobility of character. It is an honour to him, and I have not the slightest doubt—But we can say more on that subject when we are alone. I dare say," he added with a smile, "I dare say there's plenty of room for improvement. We'll nevertheless drink his health. Charles, my boy, I was going to say something—but never mind that."

"Well," said Charles. "that is one of the most unique specimens of a compliment on record. We have long had Coke upon Littleton: we must now have 'Croly upon his son.' 'I was going to say something—but never mind that.' But, father," he added with earnestness, "I do mind it, because I know your heart so *well*—I was going to say something—but never mind that. I have however something more to say, I have to say that I feel much pleasure in proposing health and happiness to old brother George. The only fault I have to find with him is that he won't talk. Good health to you, old fellow," he added, taking George's hand. "We don't waste *much* time together: but I think of you though I don't see you. Good health to you, old boy!"

"Gentlemen," said George, in the most solemn style, "there is nothing perhaps in this lower world more touching than the moral beauty of brotherly love. Be assured that I reciprocate those sacred feelings of fraternal affection, the warm manifestation of which you have just witnessed. I thank you for drinking the health of so humble an individual as myself, and beg to be permitted to propose to you the health of the ladies."

The toast was drank, but George's style created a sensation which was not very pleasing.

"Well," said Charles, "now that we have drunk the health of the ladies in the aggregate, I have to propose one in particular. I do it because it appears George dare not do it, and while I know that Mr. Lejeune won't do it, I am quite sure that you, father, can't do it, because you don't know her sufficiently well. I propose to you health, long life, and pure happiness, to one of the most amiable creatures in the world—Miss Lejeune."

"Having," said Lejeune, "to return thanks for the compliment you have been pleased to pay my daughter, of whom I can only say that she is a *good* girl, I embrace with pleasure the opportunity of proposing

the health of Mrs. Wardle—a lady in whom you, Sir John, have caused me to feel a somewhat unusual interest, and who, I hope, if she ever should marry again, will have a second husband equally excellent with the first."

"Now then, George," said Charles, "there's a chance for you. Come, go on!"

"I beg to return thanks," said George, "for Mrs. Wardle. She is a pious person, and one whom I believe to be inspired with the pure spirit of Christianity."

The expression of Sir John's countenance, during the delivery of this brief speech, was certainly of a most extraordinary character, but it passed off unnoticed by George and Lejeune, and they very soon afterwards rejoined the ladies.

There are men in whose presence we can feel no pleasure. If they speak we are disgusted; and even if they say nothing, they annoy us. They have the power to please us only when they go, and when they are gone we feel released from an influence which weighs our spirits down. Now George possessed this influence over the mind of Sir John, who could not be really gay in his presence; but when he left the room, which he did immediately after he had had coffee, Sir John became himself again, his spirits revived, and the time passed delightfully till midnight.

When, however, all had retired, Sir John sat down coolly, with the view of asking himself a few questions, having reference to the widow and Lejeune. In the first place, why was Lejeune anxious to ascertain all about the widow? secondly, what did he mean by saying, when he proposed her health, that she was a lady in whom he felt an *unusual* interest?—a somewhat *unusual* interest!

"He is a widower," thought he, "and not very old; and she is a widow. He saw and admired her. Well, very natural! She's a very fine woman—an elegant woman; and when he heard her converse he was charmed. Well, can't a man of his years see and admire a fine woman without wishing to have her? Did I ever wish to have her? No, I never gave it a thought. Why, then, should he? It was but natural for him to inquire who and what she was; it was but natural for him to be pleased with her intelligence: there is nothing extraordinary in the fact of his perceiving that she was a very superior woman; but why should he feel this *unusual* interest? He doesn't mean to marry and take her away? I can't spare her. Where can I get another like her? She musn't go,—she musn't leave me? How can I do without her? But *does* he mean this?—that's the point. *Can* he mean it? Pooh! the thing is absurd!—and yet where's the absurdity? In what does it consist? Why should he not marry her?—why should he not at once propose to her, and take her away with him? Who could blame him?—who could blame her? But is it at all likely that he entertains such an idea? Why should he *not* entertain the idea? I certainly can't see *why* he should not; nor can I see *why*, if he does not entertain it, he should feel this *unusual* interest. And yet, perhaps, after all, I may have attached more importance to

the words than they warrant. He feels an interest. Very well ! She's an interesting woman. But an unusual interest ! Well ! She is an unusually interesting woman. This may be what he means : no doubt he means this, and this only. I feel sure that he can mean nothing else. I must, however, think a little more about this. It will never do for me to lose *her*. I must watch this gay young gentleman. True, that will be of little use ; for if he should mean to marry her, who's to prevent him ? Still I must keep my eye upon him, I shall then know, at all events, what he really means."

During this reverie the features of Sir John assumed every variety of expression, and having made up his mind to keep a sharp look out, he thoughtfully retired to bed.

Now, while Sir John had been thus anxiously engaged, Corney Craske had been quietly adding to his knowledge of George's religious devotions. He had heard much of George's private piety, but he did not believe quite so much as he had heard, and having resolved on ascertaining the exact nature of those devotional exercises for which the pious man had obtained so much credit, he slipped into an ante-room before George retired, having that day discovered an aperture through which he was able to command a view of the whole chamber. Through this ante-room George had to pass, and before he did so he locked the door.

"Hullo," whispered Corney ; "but never mind that. I can unlock that quietly when he's asleep."

George also locked the door of his chamber, and immediately lighted a library lamp, by which it was supposed that he pursued his midnight studies, as that lamp had every morning to be trimmed. He then opened a large chest, which stood near the bed, and which Corney perceived contained nothing but bottles ; and having carefully selected one and drawn the cork, he got his water-bottle and glass, sat down, mixed a bumper, and drank it right off.

"Well," thought Corney, "this, I suppose, is the opening of the service. What's the next move ?"

George replenished the glass, and produced a large box of cigars, and when he had drawn two chairs for his legs, he began to smoke luxuriously.

"Oh !" said Corney, "this then is what he calls smoking of a morn-ing for the benefit of his precious health : and this is how the wine and spirits goes which he's allus a-wanting for the sick and pious poor ! Now, this is what I call a right down, regular robbery. 'Send the poor when they are sick,' says Sir John, 'whatever they may require.' 'Corney,' says this pious beauty, 'let me have a bottle of brandy, or a bottle of pale sherry, or a bottle of the best old port, and I'll take it myself.' Yes, he does take it himself, and this is how he takes it ! Go it," he added, as George mixed again, "you'll soon pull that bottle out at this rate, and then, dear, you'd better have another. But why don't you talk or sing, or do something ?"

But George did not utter a word, nor did his countenance betray the slightest emotion. There he sat, silently smoking and drinking until

the brandy-bottle had been drained, when he lifted up the window, threw the empty bottle out, and then proceeded to open another.

"Artful," thought Corney. "That's how the botties goes! Well, I wondered what he did with his dead men, but now I see he pops 'em out o' the window, and this accounts for Borley allus kicking up a shine about the mobs o' broken bottles he finds in his garden. Now I know,—that's *it*. There you *are*. He picks up enough on 'em to arm the walls of Chany, and this is the blessed game every night. What, again!" he added, as George coolly lighted another cigar; "how many more are you going to pull out? But what do you do with the ends? Oh, I see, you 'stablish them with the ashes in that little box, which you empty, I s'pose, of a morning. But how about the pious devotions? I s'pose, p'raps, he hasn't got the steam up yet; and I s'pose when it is up he'll go in howdacious. We shall see. I'm in no hurry, dear. Pray take your time. Don't distress yourself at all on my account, dear, I beg. I shall stop and see it out, therefore don't put yourself at all out of the way. But why don't you do suffen? Sing, laugh, or cry; I don't care a button which; ony do suffen. You 'pear so dull. Come, give us a song, or a psalm, no matter which. Your society, I must say, is not very jolly. Come, send I may live, if I'd ony drink half of what you have, I'd have put all the songs I know along of all I don't know, and sung 'em all merrily together afore this!"

But no: George still kept drinking and smoking in silence, until he found the water-bottle empty, when he drank off a bumper of brandy neat, threw off his clothes, extinguished the light, and then gloomily rolled into bed.

"Good night," whispered Corney: "God bless you. If you're not a beauty I don't know who is. So these are your midnight devotions are they. Well, having stopped out the whole of the service, I s'pose now I may as well go. But stay, I've got to unlock that door. I marn't make a muddle of it: wait till he's sound."

Corney accordingly watched and listened until he heard George first breathe hard, and then snore; when conceiving that of course he was all right then, he on tiptoe, prepared to depart.

As he knew the room to be perfectly empty, he had no fear of kicking against anything in it. He nevertheless moved very stealthily along and eventually found the door.

"Now," said he, "all I have to do, is to unlock this careful. If he hears any noise, he'll be out in a second. Why where's the lock? Oh! here you are. But where's the key? Done like a dinner! The varmint has taken it into his bed-room!"

And this was the fact. Having locked the door, George, as usual, had put the key into his pocket.

"Well," thought Corney, "this is a go!—this is what I call a go! Stop now, let me consider calm. Don't be flustered: don't be flustered: look at it cool,—I'm here. Very well. I want to get out. Well! How am I to get out? That's the point. I must either go through this door or out of that window. The window. The window!

How far shall I have to drop? About forty feet. That won't do. I should break my blessed neck. Now don't be flustered. The chances is now reduced to this door. Now how is a door to be opened when it's locked and you haven't the key to unlock it? Now that's all you've got to consider. Look at it cool! look at it cool! don't be flustered! look at it cool. In the first place the door may be busted open. But that won't do: that'll kick up a noise; and he'll be out in the twinkling of an eye. So that's settled, so far. In the next place the lock may be taken off. But where's the tools? I have no tools, and having none that dodge falls to the ground. Now be quiet—*be quiet*: whatever you do, don't be flustered. The thing now amounts just to this:—you must either remain all night where you are, or knock at his door and tell him you have got in here quite by mistake. Now there's two courses—take your choice. Now stop a minute: let me consider. If I remain here all night, in the first place it won't be much of a comfort: in the next place he's quite sure to find me in the morning. So there's nothing particularly tempting in that. On the other hand, if I should knock at his door the chances are that he'll up with that blunderbuss of his and blow my brains out before he can know who I am! *That* won't be much of a treat. But even s'pose he shouldn't do this—s'pose I manage to let him know who I am before he can open his bed-room door—what excuse can I make for being here? Let's see how it'll answer:—'Who's there?' he'll say, in the first place, safe. 'Me, sir,' says I. 'Why what business have you there?' says he. 'Begg pardon, sir,' says I, 'I got in here quite by mistake.' 'But what' says he, 'have you been about all this time?' 'Sat down, sir, permiskus,' says I, 'and fell asleep.' 'What!' says he, 'sit down on the bare boards?' There you see he'd bowl me out in a twinkling, for he's just about ten times as artful as a fox, and five-and-twenty times as suspicious as a weasel. Besides, I don't believe I could *make* him understand it was only me a knockin' at the door: I believe that being three parts fresh as he must be, he'd jump out o' bed atween asleep an' awake, catch hold o' that blessed old blunderbuss fierce, and let fly at the first man he came to. So *that* cock won't fight. No: here I must remain. I shall have a very comfortable night of it no doubt. But it's no use, so make up your mind to it you must. What's done they say can't be undone, and that's true, because I can't undo that door. I once heard a song sung which goes with a whole lot o' voices beginning with, 'Stay, prithee stay.' What they mean by the prithee I don't know exact, but as it goes on to tell you that 'here you must stay till morning bright,' and 'here you must stay,' and 'here you must stay,' it states my case to a toucher. Well! what I shall do in the morning bright, and what I shall say when he finds me here, I shall have lots o' time to consider: for the present all that I've got to do is to turn my mind to my lodgings—the first lodgings unfurnished I ever had. If there was such a thing as a bed in the room I shouldn't care! or even a comfortable sofa, or a nice easy chair, or a common arm-chair, or a chair with a mere back, or a chair without a back, or a box, or a bench, or a stool, or a rug, or a little bit o' carpet, or even a door-mat:

but here we hav'nt a single individdival thing upon the face o' the earth. But, come," he added, "let's sit down somewhere. I think, p'raps, the best place'll be in the corner, 'cause then there'll be two backs you know, to hold me up. Well," he continued, having seated himself; "even this is better than standing! Come! there's some comfort in this! Now look here: here's a lesson for life: a lesson taught by what I call practicable experience. Look here. You said just now you shouldn't mind if there was a bed: you then came down to a sofa, then to an easy chair, and then by degrees you dropped as low as a mat. Well, now you have got even lower than a mat, and yet you find some comfort. Now what does this prove? Why it just proves this, that when you can't get what you like, you can make shift with what you can get. It's nonsense to say we can't bear this or that:—we don't know what we can bear till the Must o' the case comes. And it is to this Must o' the case, Corney, bor, that you should turn your particular attention. There's the ladder of Ambition chalked out from the door-mat up to the warm feather bed, and although it's more pleasant to run up that ladder than down, it matters not a bit what stave you are on so long as you accommodate your mind and body to it. That's what we used to call at school philosophy, and I fancy that I'm a philosopher now; for these bare boards—these philosopher's boards—are pretty well as hard as the philosopher's stone. I must however say that I should like to have a little drop o' that beauty's brandy, just now! but as I can't get it, I *can* do without it, and there we've the Must o' the case again! But come," he added, "let's have a snooze. You'll be sitting and thinking here all the blessed night if you don't mind, and then you know you won't be worth twopence in the morning."

Having thrust his hands down to the very bottom of his breeches pockets, and dropped his head over his right shoulder against the wainscot, he soon fell asleep, and continued to sleep till the stable clock struck six, when he awoke and began instantaneously to shiver.

"Oh!" said he, "how cruel cold. I'm like a mask of ice. My blood's friz. Corney, where's your philosophy now. Philosophy won't keep the cold out, will it?"

Corney was herewith disgusted, and rose and went to the window, and saw Peter Borley, the gardener, in a rage, for the bottle which George had thrown into the garden had evidently cut up some favourite plant.

Presently he heard George yawn, and on taking his post at the crevice he saw him helping himself to a bumper of brandy. This was soon dispatched, and George began to dress, which Corney very naturally held to be a blessing.

"Now," said he, "what's to be done? How am I to work it? I musn't be standing up! That won't do at any price. No, I must get into this blessed corner again and pretend to be right dead asleep. If he shouldn't notice me why then I can quietly follow him out and there'll be an end of the matter. If he *should* cast his eye upon me as he passes through, why then I must set my wits to work, and make the best of it. Hark! Here he comes;" And Corney,

having placed himself in a picturesque position, kept one eye half open, and watched for his appearance.

"Hullo!" exclaimed George, with a start, the very moment he entered the ante-room. "Why, what's all this? *Hallo!*" he added, shaking Corney violently by the collar. "Are you dead? Do you hear?"

"Where am I?" inquired Corney, with an appropriate expression of innocence.

"Where are you!" cried George. "You are where you ought not to be. Pray what's the meaning of all this?"

"Beg pardon, sir," said Corney. "Don't know I'm sure, sir. I feel very cold."

"Cold, sir! How came you here?"

"That's a puzzle, sir," replied Corney, looking as confused as if his intellects had been in reality scattered.

"I see how it is, sir," said George; "I see it clearly. You drank last night till you were tipsy, sir, and then like a drunken beast went to sleep there."

"That'll do!" thought Corney. "That's just the very thing."

"What have you to say for yourself?" continued George.

"I hope you'll forgive me this once," replied Corney. "I hope you will: It shall never occur again. I didn't drink but little, sir, I didn't indeed, but I's'pose that little overcame me."

"Now, sir," said George, sternly; "listen. Of all the vices by which human nature can be degraded, that of Drunkenness is at once the most disgusting, and the most dangerous. It is the germ of every other vice practised under Heaven. Recklessness and profligacy are its immediate fruits, and these swell constantly into atrocious crimes. Show me a drunkard, and I'll show you a beast: nay, I'll show you something worse than a beast—for a beast will not drink more than nature requires,—I'll show you a being in the form of a man, repudiating that Reason which is the highest—and which ought to be the most dearly cherished—gift of God! Beware of this vice as you value your soul! beware of it, sir, or it will almost imperceptibly plunge you into the vortex of inextricable ruin."

"Well, I hope you'll excuse me this once, sir," said Corney.

"Excuse you? How can I excuse you? What excuse can their be for a man like you? Had you been out—had you met with old associates and friends—there might have been some slight excuse for you, seeing that society unhappily, to a certain extent, prescribes what is understood by conviviality; but for a man to drink as you must have drank in secret and alone, it is, sir, disgusting in the extreme."

"I *could* say suffen," thought Corney, "but I dussent."

"Now, sir," continued George; "mark me. If I ever again perceive in you the slightest indication of an indulgence in this most odious vice, I'll immediately procure your discharge. Recollect, sir! Go and sin no more."

"Well," thought Corney, as he hastened down stairs, "this is middlin' certney, considerin'. 'In secret and alone!' Comin' from him this was

rich. But never mind. I've got over it quite as well as I expected. Let's rush to the fire and have a jolly warm."

George, having thus performed that which he conceived would be considered his duty—mounted his horse and rode round the adjoining farm; and while Charles and Lejeune were with Borley in the garden, Sir John and the Widow were in the breakfast-room alone.

"I should like," said Sir John, "to have a party to-day. Can it be managed?"

"Certainly, Sir John," replied the Widow. "What sort of a party would you like to have?"

"One of your own sort, Mrs. Wardle. I'll leave it entirely to you. The parties whom you invite are always agreeable."

"You flatter me, Sir John."

"Not at all. They always are so. Therefore take your own ponies immediately after breakfast, and drive round and invite whom you please. By the way, Mrs. Wardle, what do you think of our friend Lejeune?"

"Oh! he is indeed a most gentlemanly man," replied the Widow; "so calm, so elegant in his manners, so polite—so exceedingly polite."

"Take care, Mrs. Wardle! take care of your heart," said Sir John, as the Widow smiled. "These fascinating fellows are dangerous dogs."

"I hope," said the widow, archly, "that *I'm* in no danger?"

"I hope not, I merely warn you. All I have to say, is take care of your heart."

"That, Sir John, is locked up securely."

"Aye! but he may obtain possession of the key!"

"The key, Sir John," said the widow, with emotion, "the key is in the grave!"

"Why what have I said!" cried Sir John, on perceiving tears spring into her eyes. "You know, Mrs. Wardle, you know that I wouldn't wound your feelings for the world. Come, come, come—there, I must not, I find, jest any more. But," he added, with a view of changing the subject, "what do you think of *Miss* Lejeune?"

"Oh! she's a love!" replied the widow, with her usual smile. "A little angel! so endearing, so affectionate; she is indeed a charming little girl."

"Don't you wish that she was a few years older for my sake?"

"If she were a few years older," replied the widow, "I don't know what I might *think*!"

"But even as it is!—why there's only about thirty years difference! I must think about this, Mrs. Wardle. You have really recommended her to me so strongly that I must think, Mrs. Wardle, I must think!"

He then gaily left the room, and, as he did so, his thoughts reverted to his reverie the preceding night. That Lejeune had already made an impression upon the widow, was a fact which seemed to him to be abundantly clear, and that the impression thus made had prepared her to meet him half-way, was, in his judgment, equally certain. Now, what was to be done?"

"If," thought he, "I allow this to go much further, the affair will have gone too far to be prevented. But what did she mean, when I mentioned her heart, by saying that the key was in the grave? Did she mean that she could never love another? She must have meant that. But Lejeune, notwithstanding, might marry her and take her away from me! Hearts do not always go with hands. Instead of winning her heart to gain her hand, he may gain her hand to win her heart. And who's to prevent it? Why, I'll prevent it: I'll marry her myself, and there'll be an end of the matter. But stop, stop, stop, do nothing hastily. Reflect—reflect deeply: consider: turn the matter over in your mind before you come to any decision. I *will* do so; but he shall not have her."

During breakfast Lejeune, as if conscious of all that had been passing in the mind of Sir John, although, of course, it never entered his imagination, for one moment, paid the Widow the most marked attention. He chatted with her, laughed with her, addressed nearly the whole of his observations to her; in short, his gaiety and politeness were excessive. Of course, Sir John noticed all this and didn't like it. He wouldn't bring his mind to approve of it at all! He felt it, under the circumstances, to be an infringement upon his privileges; and a peculiarly dangerous infringement too! Still he appeared not to be in the slightest degree annoyed. He chatted with Juliana, exchanged jests with Charles, and apparently enjoyed himself much; but in reality he experienced—he could not but experience—a series of very unpleasing sensations. After breakfast the ponies were put to the phaeton, and the Widow and Juliana, accompanied by Charles on horseback, left the Hall, when Sir John and Lejeune conversed, for some time together, on the subject of Charles's progress and general conduct, and then took a ride round the park.

George had taken breakfast with one of Sir John's tenants, a fine, open-hearted old farmer, named Freeman, to whose daughter, Jane, it was supposed George was paying his addresses:

Being the elder son, George was, of course, attacked constantly by the female branches of the neighbouring families, with a view to a conquest. They could not think of a party without inviting George: they could not dream of a dance without pressing George to come: if they met him on the road they must stop and speak to George: if they visited the Hall, George was still the chief magnet. Sir John was a secondary being altogether; and, as for Charles!—the young ladies certainly wished that he had been the first-born; but they had been carefully instructed to regard him as a mere nonentity compared with George.

George, however, saw through all this, and treated their efforts to enthral him with contempt. He would scarcely speak with civility to any one of them; and, frequently, bitter was the mortification experienced by gentle, and obedient girls, who had been specially desired to assail him. He would treat them with the utmost rudeness—he would hardly look at them! Still, although his manners while with them were stiff and repulsive in the extreme—although he was thoroughly, heartily hated, it could not be forgotten that he was the elder son!

He seldom, however, consented to meet them, and never remained long where they were. He would often, when Sir John had a party at the Hall, ride over to Freeman's, and spend the evening there; and, as Jane believed this to be a sacrifice to her, she invariably felt proud, if not happy.

Now, Jane was a singularly beautiful girl, elegant in form, and graceful in deportment. She was an only child,—the pride of her father's heart; but she was an exceedingly simple girl, and George had taught her to be ambitious. She conceived that at the death of Sir John he would, of course, be "Sir George," and the idea of becoming "Lady Croly" perpetually haunted her vivid imagination.

"What," thought she, "will the world say then! When, instead of jogging to market in a common gig, I go in my own carriage and desire it to be driven from shop to shop; will it not be delightful! Oh, what a fuss there will be when I appear! 'What can I have the pleasure of showing you, my lady? I can recommend this to your ladyship strongly. Is there any other article I can show your ladyship? Thank you my lady. Smith, Lady Croly's carriage.' Oh! that will be delicious! And then when I go to the theatre dressed in magnificent style—my fingers covered with rings, and my stomacher studded with brilliants: with gold ear-drops, bracelets, and armlets and chains, and a lovely tiara of beautiful pearls, every eye will be fixed upon Lady Croly! And then when we have our bespeak, and I see it announced, 'By express desire and under the immediate patronage of Sir George and Lady Croly!' I shall go nearly frantic with joy!"

Freeman knew nothing whatever of this. George had not only never proposed for her, but he had never even mentioned the subject to him; and when Jane, on one occasion, slyly hinted that it *might* be Mr. George's intention to propose, he replied briefly, "Silly girl—silly girl—pooh! Don't fill your head with any such nonsense." He encouraged George's visits chiefly in consequence of his being at once the son and the Steward of his landlord—conceiving, naturally, that his friendship might be advantageous—and as nothing was ever said in his presence which could lead him to imagine for one moment that George entertained the slightest feeling of affection for Jane, he never gave the subject a thought.

Having immediately after breakfast on this occasion accompanied Freeman over his farm, he returned to the Hall and ascertained that they were going to have a set party. At first he resolved on absenting himself entirely from it; but, on reflection, knowing that this party had been invited expressly in order to meet Lejeune, and feeling that his absence on the occasion would be regarded by him as a slight, that might tend to create a prejudice in his mind against him, which he held it to be, under the circumstances, wise to avoid, he determined not only on being present, but on making every effort that might be consistent with the character he had assumed, to propitiate him with whom the course of events seemed to indicate that he should have to deal anon. He saw the influence that Lejeune had over Charles, and fancied that it might be extended to Sir John. It had never occurred to him before, but it was then, in his judgment, quite clear that Le-

jeune's good opinion might be eventually of great importance. He, therefore, sought him, and devoted the remaining part of the morning to him; and, as he could converse agreeably when he pleased, which was indeed very seldom, he to some extent succeeded in removing that unfavourable impression which his previous taciturnity and stiffness had created. In the meantime the Widow had enlisted nearly all the conventionally pleasant people in the neighbourhood, and as she and Juliana worked together on their return, for they had already become almost inseparable, the preparations, which gave evidence of the most refined taste, were satisfactorily completed before the guests began to arrive.

These guests, however, were not exclusively those who had been invited, for, as in all parts of the provinces, the Aristocratic circles are studded with younger sons, the chief energies of whose powerful minds are patriotically devoted to fox and fortune hunting, so here there were several of these valuable young members of society, who had crept in with the view of ascertaining if Juliana were likely to answer their purpose.

The characteristics of these young philanthropists, of course, are well known. They are at once the most ostentatious and the meanest of all the creatures upon earth. They are not worth a shilling: they very seldom have a shilling. They sponge upon all above them, and treat all who are in the social scale, beneath them, with contempt; except, indeed, when they meet with a tradesman out, when they sometimes will condescend to say, "Jones, how are yar?" but will add, "Oh, Jones! lend me half a sovereign, will yar? I've left my purse at home; I'll send it by one of our fellows in the morning." When Jones, of course, lends the half sovereign; and of course, never has it returned.

"Hallo, Harry," said one of these interesting youths on this occasion, just before dinner was announced, "you here! Whom did you come with?"

"I came with the Flakes," replied Harry.

"Oh, ah; I came with the Balshalls. I say," he added, glancing at Juliana, "any tin?"

"Lot's, I understand."

"What's the figure?"

"Can't say."

"Any more of them?"

"No; she's an only child."

"What's he?"

"An eminent Barrister I hear."

"Oh; a Barrister. Barrister's are what they make judges of; ah."

"What do you think of her? Not much of a beauty?"

"Oh, I don't know! Pretty fair! But what's beauty compared with the tin? Can get beauty any where. Tin's the ticket: that's a much scarcer commodity than beauty."

Dinner was now announced, and on descending from the drawing-room they found everything prepared in the most *recherche* style. Juliana was, of course, the great attraction. Every eye was turned constantly

upon her, and while those who sat near her were indefatigable in their attentions, those who were at a distance made every effort to catch her glance. Charles was, as usual, the gayest of the gay, and, as even George had made up his mind to be agreeable, they appeared to be one of the most happy parties ever formed.

The ladies, notwithstanding, very soon after dinner retired; and while the gentlemen were enjoying themselves unrestrained by their presence, they were freely discussing the varied merits of that highly important subject which comprehends the management of husbands.

It will here be right to explain that the introduction of this subject sprang immediately from the fact that a lady whom they had been in the constant habit of meeting, was on this occasion absent, in consequence, it was affirmed, of the shocking interference of her husband, who had had the audacity to complain of some portion of her dress—an interference at which she indignantly fired, and declared that she would not go out at all.

One contended that the majority of husbands were really too bad to be managed: another pronounced them to be tyrants at heart; a third suggested the expediency of passing a law to bring them under subjection; a fourth argued that they were never intended to reign paramount; while a fifth undertook to make it manifest that, as they could not establish their claim to intellectual superiority, their presumption ought not to be endured. At length the Widow was appealed to, and that appeal was followed by the most marked attention.

"Nature, my dears," said the Widow, with a smile, "has, in her vast and inscrutable wisdom, inspired you with a high admiration of the men. You love them,—some of you passionately,—but all of you love them, and most of you spoil them."

"Spoil them!" they exclaimed.

"Ay, my dears, the great majority of you spoil them; for, although you might have formed a just estimate of them before you had them, you don't know how to manage them now you have got them."

"Mrs. Wardle! Mrs. Wardle! My dear!" interposed half-a-dozen married ladies at once.

"Experience," pursued the Widow, "has fully convinced me that you do not know,—and, therefore, cannot appreciate your own power: it has proved to me that in your hands husbands are but as wax—that you can make the good ones bad, and the bad ones good—that you possess so much power over their habits, tempers, feelings, and general character that there not only ought not to be, but, were you to exercise that power, there really might not be a bad husband in the world."

"Good gracious!" they exclaimed; "why, what an extraordinary doctrine!"

"You have read, dears," continued the Widow—"probably when you were girls—of a practice which once prevailed of punishing parents for the faults of their children, it being held that as the children were under their control, they ought to have taught them better. Now so strongly do I feel that you have the power to control your husbands, and to teach *them* better, that I should be inclined to hold you publicly responsible

for their faults, did I not know that, by neglecting the due exercise of your power, you in private sufficiently punish yourselves. We must never, my dears, allow it for one moment to escape us that wives have duties to perform, as well as rights to maintain; and while I hold it to be one of their chief duties to guide the tempers, the habits, and the passions of their husbands, I conceive it to be their most inalienable right to *make* their husbands love them; and they are dear good souls, too, and worth all the trouble. I know married ladies who, although they might be just as happy as birds, are comparatively wretched. And why? Because they all go the wrong way to work."

"But which way *are* they to go to work?" exclaimed several, who couldn't at all appreciate the prudence involved in the Widow's observations.

The Widow smiled, and said, "The management of husbands, my dears, is an art—an art which, as your happiness depends solely upon it, ought to form your chief study. Some of you probably, when very young, conceived that all you had to do in this beautiful world was to *win* the affections of those who are now your husbands—as a nephew of mine, when a medical student, fancied that all he had to do was to pass the College of Surgeons and Apothecaries Hall—but as wives, we have something more to do: we have a far higher duty to perform—we have, in order to perpetuate happiness, to *keep* those affections secure! When my nephew had obtained his diploma from the College, and his certificate from the Hall, he conceived for a time that nothing more was required; but he very soon found that he had to study diligently still, or sacrifice every hope of prosperity and consequent happiness. It is the study, my dears, the constant study of the character of the man to whom a woman is united, which forms the very basis of a wife's felicity. I have known girls—and so have you doubtless—who have been before marriage, induced almost to believe that they were angels; and when, after marriage, they found that they were treated but as mortals, they began to look round! They had no conception of its being necessary to study the characters of their husbands, although to that particular study they ought to have directed their almost undivided attention. Besides, my dears," continued the Widow, playfully, "we do not sufficiently maintain our dignity! We appear in general to have but a very imperfect knowledge of our own importance. We should take a more enlarged—a more elevated view of our own position. We should perfectly understand that in the scale of society we are the most important people after all! Look at our influence!—take it in *any* point of view, and we shall find that we have infinitely more than the men. There are popular novelists. Who are their readers? Could they have become popular without us? There are popular preachers. Who are their hearers? *We* are principally; and from us their popularity has been derived. Look at our charities, our fancy fairs, our fetes, our assemblies of every character and description. What would they be without us? Go to the metropolis: who attend our religious meetings? We do, twenty to one. Go into the provinces: who support the various branches of the parent societies? We do almost exclusively. We

are the patronesses of everything connected with refinement and benevolence—we are, my dears, in fact, the most influential people in the world! Reproachfully it is said—whenever anything wrong occurs—‘Oh, there’s a woman in the case: ah, a woman is sure to be at the bottom of everything bad.’ But, do you not perceive, my dears, that this—although constantly said as a reproach—is, in reality, an acknowledgement of our influence? And if we have—as we have most certainly—sufficient influence over the men to cause them to do evil, we have at least an equally powerful influence over them when our aim is to cause them to do good; and it is, my dears, by virtue of the due and discreet exercise of this influence that wives are enabled to manage their husbands.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Montague, “certainly, I must agree with a great deal of what you have said. The theory is all very well and very flattering; but let us take a practical view of the matter. Suppose—I will put it hypothetically—suppose that you had a very awkward husband—one whom you could do nothing with.”

“Nay, don’t suppose that,” rejoined the Widow, “because you suppose an utter impossibility. There is no such man in existence.”

“Well, let that be admitted; but suppose you had one who would not be controlled—who would have his own way—now, what would you do with him?”

“Why, my dear,” replied the Widow, “I should never, at first, think of opposing him. I should study his character, and while yielding, acquire an influence over him; and, when I found him sufficiently subdued to be assailable, I should gradually bring that influence to bear.”

“Then you would humour him.”

“Of course.”

“But why should they be humoured?”

“Do they not humour us? We must, my dear, humour them, in order to ensure our own happiness. Besides, with such men, direct opposition tends only to confirm obstinacy; whereas by gentle treatment they are to be subdued. I will give you a perfectly analogous case:—The other day I went over to Cambridge, to see my son. Thomas drove me, and we had Sir John’s favourite grey. Well, we had scarcely got a mile on the road, when the horse took it into his head to stop and back. Now, Thomas had studied the character of that horse, and, by virtue of that study, knew that the more he whipped him, the more obstinate he would become. He, therefore, gave me the reins and went up to his head, and spoke to him mildly, and patted and coaxed him, which had the effect desired, for we had no more trouble with him: he went along beautifully after that. Now had Thomas lashed him when he was naughty and stopped, he would, in all probability, have kicked the gig to pieces, but, as he spoke to him calmly, and humoured him a little, we had an extremely pleasant journey. I call this, my dear, an analogous case because it is thus with the men. If we oppose them to begin with, or lash them with our tongues, they will, so to speak, kick at once over the traces; but if we study their characters and humour them a little, we shall travel together with pleasure through life.”

As the time had now arrived for the gentlemen to rejoin them, no more was said on the subject then; but although they enjoyed themselves highly throughout the evening, it was clear that the Widow's "Theory" had made an impression on them all.

CHAPTER III.

THE FAILURE.

As Sir John suspected still that Lejeune had conceived an ardent affection for the Widow, and as he regarded the politeness with which they addressed each other as manifestations of reciprocal esteem, he resolved on delicately sounding Lejeune, with the view of ascertaining at once whether his suspicions had, in reality, sufficient foundation or not.

But then, how was this to be done? He couldn't ask him the question! He could not say to him, "Do you love Mrs. Wardle?"—or "Have you any wish or intention to marry her?"—or "Would you like to have her?"—or "Don't you think she'd make a very excellent wife?" This was a difficulty upon which he for some time dwelt and was puzzled; but he, nevertheless, made up his mind at length to touch the matter lightly, and leave the rest to chance.

He, accordingly—embracing the very first opportunity which offered—commenced thus:—"Now, my dear Lejeune, if there be anything which I can do, at all calculated to add to your comfort, I do beg of you to tell me so frankly."

"I feel it to be impossible," replied Lejeune, "to make any addition to my comfort here. You are too kind, Sir John—too considerate: you load me with obligations."

"Not at all! Nothing can give me greater pleasure than the consciousness of having imparted pleasure to those around me. And, then, that dear little daughter of yours: is she happy?"

"I have not, Sir John, seen her so happy for years. But how can she be otherwise than happy, entertained as she is by Mrs. Wardle, with the most affectionate solicitude? I can never feel sufficiently grateful to that amiable and interesting person."

"She's a kind, good creature," observed Sir John.

"She's a treasure," said Lejeune. "But you know her value, and I cannot feel surprised at the fact of her being regarded as a treasure by you. She has completely fascinated my Juliana, and really her manners are so endearing that I expect we shall have a scene when they part."

"She is, I know, very much attached to Juliana," said Sir John. "But," he added with a peculiar expression, "do you not think it strange that a woman like that should not have managed to get another husband?"

"Not at all," replied Lejeune, "you make her so happy in her present position, that, if happiness be her object—and I believe that it is—she can scarcely, in any state, hope for more."

"Still, women are women," returned Sir John, "and you know, Lejeune, what women are. But I don't believe that, since Wardle's death, she has even had an offer!"

"Now you surprise me, indeed!" said Lejeune. "I can well understand that a woman of her intelligence—appreciating the happiness she at present enjoys—would be unwilling to run the risk of accepting an offer: but the fact of her never having had an offer made her is strange, as you say, in the extreme. Do you think if any one were to propose—I mean, of course, one to whom she could have no objection—no reasonable personal objection—she would have him?"

"Don't know," replied Sir John, who became apprehensive that the next question put to him would have immediate reference to Lejeune's personal pretensions—"can't tell. As I said before: women are women, and you know what women are. But, he added—conceiving that it wouldn't do at all to be questioned any farther upon this particular point—"the morning's wearing away!—Shall we have a quiet turn round the park?"

"As you please," replied Lejeune; "I am quite at your disposal."

"Then we'll go," said Sir John; who rang the bell immediately and ordered the horses.

"Now," thought he, "there can be no doubt about the matter. It is manifest, not only that he means to propose, but that he has made up his mind to have her. But he shall *not* have her!—I'll have her myself. Her 'affectionate solicitude'—Ah.—'I can never feel sufficiently grateful to that *amiable* and *interesting* person.'—No. 'She's a treasure.'—Yes. 'She has fascinated my Juliana'—Aye, and at the same time has fascinated him!—'Do you *think* that if any one were to propose?' Why, the very next question would have been, 'Do you think that if *I* were to propose she would have me?' I stopped just in time—but *just* in time. Had I allowed the subject to be pursued any further, of course, out it would have come. Now, how am I to act? Why, break the ice at once. But how?—And when? All the morning she's engaged,—so she is all the evening! Well, then defer it till night; Wait till all the rest have retired, and then you can calmly discuss the whole matter, without the slightest chance or fear of being interrupted. It shall be so.—But, should she refuse?—Pooh! How can she refuse? What can she object to? My age?—She's not a girl. My face? Well, I don't know; nor will I pretend to say, but I think there is nothing very objectionable in that! I *used* to be considered a fine, handsome fellow. Age, certainly, makes a wonderful difference in a man's appearance; but, for an old one, I should like to know what's the matter with me.—I have health, and I have wealth; I have, moreover, a title to give her, such as it is. She will, at all events, be 'Lady Croly,' instead of Mrs. Wardle, and I never knew a woman by whom a title was not regarded as a thing to be desired. Why, then, should she object? What is there to object to? She'll not object. This night, if I live, it shall be settled."

The horses were now brought; and he and Lejeune prepared to mount, but, just as they were about to do so, they observed a post-chaise in

the distance, dashing through the park, in the direction of the Hall. They therefore waited, and as it approached, Lejeune recognized his confidential clerk, who, on alighting, drew him aside, and communicated something which, on the instant, filled him with consternation.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, "Phillips, I am utterly ruined. I'll return with you at once.—Sir John," he added, tremulously turning from the clerk, "I am sorry that I must leave you."

"Leave!" cried Sir John, "why what has occurred?"

"Something, so important, that I must immediately return to town."

"Well, but, my dear fellow, why are you so agitated? Come, let me claim now the privilege of a friend, and enquire what has happened?"

"My dear Sir John, I cannot enter into particulars—indeed I do not yet know the particulars myself, but I fear that I am a ruined man."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Sir John, earnestly. "Let us hope not: come, let us hope not. Go and see—go and see; and, Lejeune," he added, grasping his hand, "you must promise that you'll write to me and let me know the worst."

"I will write—I will. But my poor girl, she must know nothing of this!"

"Certainly not—certainly not; I'll manage that. I'm glad she's out. Now, don't lose a moment; but remember, if I can render you any assistance, command me."

Lejeune shook him warmly by the hand, and then hastily entered the chaise with his clerk.

"You promise," cried Sir John, "to write and let me know all!"

"I do," replied Lejeune, and immediately started.

Sir John now went in search of Charles, who was out with Juliana and the Widow; and as Charles shortly afterwards saw him riding alone he immediately turned and galloped towards him.

"My boy," said Sir John, as Charles approached, "I fear that something serious has happened to Lejeune."

"I hope not," cried Charles. "Has he fallen from his horse?"

"No, my boy, no; I fear that something worse than that has happened. Just as we were about to take a ride together, a post-chaise dashed up to the Hall, when in an instant a gentleman alighted and summoned him hastily to town.

"Some highly important case, perhaps," said Charles, "upon which his opinion is required."

"No, my boy, no; he had just time to tell me that he feared he was a ruined man."

"A ruined man! Why what on earth can have occurred! A ruined man! Why, what can ruin him? He never speculates!—Did he say no more?"

"He promised to write and let me know all, and wished his daughter, of course, to be kept in ignorance of the matter. But silence: they approach. We must tell her he's gone, and having eased her mind as to the cause, we'll go and talk the affair over together privately. Well," he added, addressing Juliana, "have you had a pleasant ride?"

"Oh, delightful," replied Juliana; "but where is papa?"

"What would you say now," returned Sir John, playfully, "if I were to tell you he's gone to get married?"

"Sir John, you are a droll man," observed Juliana.

"Well, but what else could he want to leave in such haste for? What do *you* think Mrs. Wardle? You have had some experience in these matters—"

"But has he really left?" enquired Juliana.

Yes; he left just now in a post chaise, which was not at the door two minutes before he was off. Is not that a clear case of elopement?"

"Certainly he has eloped," said the Widow; "but business, perhaps, was the cause?"

"Well," returned Sir John, "you have guessed it pretty nearly. We shall, however, soon have him back."

"It must be something very important," observed Juliana, "or he never would have left in such haste."

"Bless you! he had no time for anything! The gentleman who came in the post-chaise hurried him away as if it had been a case of life or death."

"And it is a case of life or death most likely," said Charles, "such cases, of course, admit of no delay. Well, ladies," he added, "do you extend your ride?"

The Widow perceived that Juliana had no desire to do so then; she, therefore, replied, "We think not this morning," and at once returned with them to the Hall."

"Now, my boy," said Sir John, having retired to the library, "I shall not rest until I know more of this matter."

"Nor shall I," returned Charles. "It must be something of great importance. He is not a man whom trifles can alarm; but I am altogether at a loss to conjecture how he can be ruined! He enters into no speculations. He holds mortgages, certainly, but the amount of each does not exceed two-thirds of the ascertained value of the property."

"There is something, my boy, of which you have no knowledge. I am unable of course to conceive what it is; but I'll not allow a man like that to be struck down, if it be in my power to prevent it, without inflicting any material injury upon myself or upon those who are more immediately connected with me."

"Shall I go up," said Charles, "and ascertain what it is?"

"Do so, my boy. Go at once. It were folly to speculate now upon the manner in which assistance can be rendered. Go and learn exactly how the case stands, and then we shall know how to act. Now let me see! How shall we manage? Shall we send for a post-chaise? Yes! and when it comes you can get in at once, and be off like Lejeune. That'll do!—will it not?"

"Exactly," said Charles; "and will tend to allay the fears of Juliana, who is not, I perceive, quite satisfied yet."

"Well, then, send Bob at once. Tell him to order a chaise to be

here as soon as possible. Tell him to see it off. *He* need not hurry back. It may as well come without him."

Charles accordingly gave Bob the necessary instructions, and then returned to the library, where he and Sir John had a biscuit and a glass of wine together, and continued to converse until they saw the chaise approaching, when they went out at once upon the lawn. The chaise had no sooner pulled up than Charles entered, and having shaken hands with Sir John, who closed the door, gave the word, and was off.

Sir John now sought Juliana, and having found her with the Widow, exclaimed—"Another elopement! Bless my life and soul! why, what sort of a case can this be! Charles is off now!"

"Charles off!" echoed Juliana.

"Oh! yes. A post-chaise came dashing up while we were on the lawn. No ceremony!—in he must go!—and that on the very same business."

"Why, it must be a *very* important case," observed the Widow.

"When I was young," remarked Sir John, "these things required a deal of deliberation; but now everything appears to be conducted in the midst of hurry and bustle."

"There is one consolation even in that," said the Widow. "The more haste they make, the sooner we shall have the pleasure of seeing them again."

"Well," said Juliana, "I am glad that papa has not been summoned alone. Had he been, I might have thought that something unpleasant had occurred respecting him personally."

"Oh! they are both engaged in it," returned Sir John.

"Perhaps," suggested the Widow, "Mr. Lejeune is gone to receive some high appointment! Who knows? 'Mr. Justice Lejeune' would sound nicely, would it not? 'Lord Lejeune' would be an elegant alliteration."

Juliana shook her head slightly and smiled, when Sir John, apprehensive of raising delusive hopes, said, "Doubtless it is some important case upon which Lejeune's opinion is required," and left them.

The dinner that day passed off flatly; and it may be recorded that, while Sir John failed to act upon his previously fixed determination to propose to the Widow that night, the absence of Charles was never before so much felt by Juliana.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FUGITIVE.

IMMEDIATELY on his arrival in town, Charles went to the house of Lejeune, and having ascertained that he had gone to his brother's, he followed and found him there. As, however, it was intimated to him that they were in close conversation, he would not allow himself to be announced, but waited until Lejeune was about to depart in a most distressing state of excitement.

"My dear fellow!" he exclaimed on seeing Charles, "why how is this? How is it that you are here?"

"The governor sent me," said Charles, as he pressed Lejeune's trembling and feverish hand. "But what on earth has occurred?"

"Come," said Lejeune, abstractedly, "come: we'll go home. But," he added, with earnestness, "how did you leave my poor child?"

"With her mind quite at ease," replied Charles. "We induced her to believe that your opinion was required on some case of pressing importance."

"Pressing, indeed, Charles," rejoined Lejeune, mournfully; "pressing indeed."

They then entered the chaise which was waiting at the door, and in ten minutes they were at home.

"Now," said Charles, "let me entreat you to be calm. The affair—whatever it is—may not be so bad as your present fears lead you to expect. What is it? For heaven's sake subdue this agitation. You know that you are not the strongest man in the world, and this violent excitement cannot in any case do good, while it may do much harm. Come, let me know the worst."

"Charles," said Lejeune, with an expression of intensity, "I am ruined. The fruits of a life of struggles—of honourable struggles—have been withered by one blast. After all my anxiety to place my poor child far beyond the reach of want, I have been, by one blow, struck down; and she must be struck down with me."

"My dear friend," said Charles, "even I have had sufficient experience to know that our first fears are very seldom realised. They may, for a time, appear to be justified, but they cause the imagination to teem with the apprehension of evils which, in general, may be at least partially averted. Now, let us look at the whole case calmly. How can you have been so completely struck down as you imagine? What has happened?"

"I have lost every shilling," replied Lejeune. "My brother Richard—on whose judgment I placed unlimited confidence—whom I, and all with whom he was connected, conceived to be a wealthy man—and whom I allowed to draw upon me to any amount he might require—became, a short time since, involved in a mining speculation, which has been proved to have been one of those monstrous bubbles by which the world has of late been amazed. He is ruined; and I am ruined, too. His liabilities are infinitely greater than he can meet, while the amount of mine exceeds all I have the power to pay."

"Then you have not speculated yourself?"

"I never did: I never would. But in *his* hands I thought I was safe."

"Of course. But perhaps some arrangement can be made. What sort of men were the projectors?"

"Some of the first men in the City—men of immense wealth and influence. But *they* have taken care to get out."

"Oh! I see," said Charles, thoughtfully; "I see."

"The last shares sold," continued Lejeune, "were purchased by Richard; and immediately after that sale the bubble burst."

"A bad job," said Charles; "a very bad job. But let me beg of you not to be excited: something may be done yet. How does your brother bear up against it?"

"I found and left him almost mad—more, much more, on my account than his own. He concealed it from me until the last, in the vain hope of being able, at least, to save me; but one of my bills became due yesterday, and has, of course, been dishonoured."

"How many have you out?"

"Seven, for three thousand each."

"Do you know where they are?"

"They are all, I believe, in the hands of that usurer Lumplon, whom you have seen here, and who, it is said, has cleared seventy thousand pounds by the transaction."

"Well, he must be seen," said Charles; "he must be seen. I wish that they had been in the hands of any other man. But something may be done even with him. Have you any objection to my calling on your brother?"

"I should feel indeed obliged if you would call and talk to him, and try to make the best of it. Go, my dear Charles—go at once."

"And you will promise to make every effort to subdue that excitement which is now but too manifest?"

"I will," replied Lejeune, whose agitation was still excessive; and Charles having pressed his hand warmly again, left him, and called upon Richard, whom he found, to his amazement, quite cheerful.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as Charles entered the room. "Well, now, this is kind. But I knew you would come—I was sure of it. Now, then, draw up, and let's enjoy ourselves like Christians."

Charles looked at him with an expression of surprise; but he at once drew up to the table, on which were placed various dishes of fruit, and two bottles of wine.

"Now help yourself," he continued, "and then we'll go to business. Have you brought the cheque with you?"

"The cheque?" said Charles. "What cheque?"

"What cheque! Why the cheque you promised to bring me!—the cheque for ten thousand!"

"Oh!—the cheque!" cried Charles, who now perceived that he was labouring under some delusion.

"Why, you hadn't forgotten it, had you?"

"Forgotten it!" said Charles.

"Well, then, where is it?"

"I have not drawn it yet."

"Then, draw it now."

"You shall have it in the morning."

"I must have it now!"

"Well, but you can't get it cashed till the morning."

"That doesn't matter;—I like a man to perform his promise. If you don't draw it now, you're not a man of your word."

"Well, but I've not my book with me!"

"Who are your bankers?"

"Oh!" cried Charles, "I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll run and get it. It will not take me long. I shall not be gone more than twenty minutes."

"Then do so. Don't trifle with me. There's a good fellow: don't trifle with me, now!—But stop!" he added suddenly; "Stop, I'll not trust you!"

"Not trust me? What! not trust *me*?"

"Send for the book."

"How can I send for it when it's locked up? But, let one of your servant's go with me."

"Very well!—that'll *do*."

"Shall I ring the bell?" said Charles.

"Do so—do so—yes, do so."

The bell was rung accordingly, and when the servant entered, Richard addressing him said, "Now, sir, I want you to go with this gentleman and bring him back with you." Then drawing him aside, he added in a whisper, "Now mind! that's Johnson. Don't leave him for an instant!"

"Johnson!" said the servant; "that's Mr. Charles Croly!"

"Hush!" His name is Johnson, I tell you! Stick to him, and don't come back without him."

Charles and the servant then quitted the room, and as they did so, Richard, whose eyes rolled wildly, replenished his glass.

"Why, what's the matter with master?" enquired the servant. "Is he mad?"

"I fear that he is," replied Charles.

"Why, he said your name was Johnson!"

"Johnson?"

"Yes; and when I told that you were Mr. Croly, he said, 'Hush! his name is Johnson, I tell you.'"

"Poor fellow," said Charles, "poor fellow! Come with me. Who is his medical man?"

"Why, sir, Dr. Greene attends him when he's out o' sorts."

"Where does he live?"

"In Russell Square."

"Then call a coach at once, and we'll go to Dr. Greene."

A coach was called, and they proceeded to the residence of the doctor, whom, fortunately, Charles found at home.

"Dr. Greene," said Charles, on being ushered into the room in which the doctor had been reading, "you are, I believe, the professional friend of Mr. Lejeune—Mr. Richard Lejeune?"

"I am," replied the doctor. "Is he not well?"

"I fear," said Charles, "that his reason is affected."

"Good God! you don't mean that? But how—how affected?"

Charles explained to him the substance of all that had occurred.

"Well," said the doctor, "I'll go with you at once. But that cheque. You had better draw one for the amount. I'll give you one of mine. He may not ask for it, but if he should, it may tend to tranquillize his mind."

The cheque was drawn, and Charles returned with the Doctor.

But where was Richard Lejeune? He was not to be found. The

drawing-room in which Charles had left him was in precisely the same state as before, while the servants had no knowledge of his having left the house. Every room was searched, but without effect, when it struck Charles that he might have gone to call upon his brother, and, as the Doctor agreed with Charles, in thinking this extremely probable, they hastened to Lejeune's: but, no; he was not there; nor had he been. Lejeune himself, they ascertained, was in a high state of fever. He had been ordered to bed by his medical man, who was then with him. But, Richard; what had become of him? They returned to the house and sent the servants in every direction, but no tidings of him could be heard.

"Who is Mr. Johnson?" enquired the Doctor.

No one there knew.

"He's gone," he added, "probably to call upon him. We must not give him up; he may shortly return. Let us wait."

They did wait: they waited till past two o'clock; when the Doctor, filled with gloomy apprehensions, went home, and Charles who was equally apprehensive, returned to Lejeune.

Mr. Raymond, the medical man, was still there. Lejeune had become delirious, but he recognized Charles, whose hand he grasped and kept in his, and talked in an incoherent strain about his brother. The delirium, however, was but slight; still neither Charles nor Mr. Raymond would leave the room: they remained by the bedside together until eight in the morning, when, as Lejeune had become somewhat tranquil—Charles left, with the view of renewing his search after Richard.

Every friend whom the servants could think of was applied to in vain: not one had either seen or heard anything of him. Handbills were issued; advertisements were sent to the papers; every effort was made to discover him, dead or alive, without effect, until at length, both Charles and the Doctor gave him up for lost.

Meanwhile, Lejeune had been reduced almost to a state of coma; and as Charles, Dr. Greene, and Mr. Raymond agreed that if some arrangement were made, having reference to those bills, the knowledge of the fact would have at once a very favourable effect; Charles called upon Mr. Campbell, a highly respectable solicitor, and one of Lejeune's personal friends—and, having explained to him the whole of the circumstances, went with him to see Lumplon, the presumed holder of the bills.

Lumplon was an extremely illiterate man; he could scarcely write his own name. His parents were neither poor nor respectable: they had acquired the property they possessed by the pursuit of the most despicable practices, and had taught their son only to "get money," no matter by what means. He began life on his own account, as a money lender on a small scale. He would have *tangible* security—plate, jewellery, or goods of any description—worth three or four times the amount of the sum advanced; and as these goods were almost invariably forfeited, he extended his sphere of action—increased the amount of his advances—got small tradesmen in his power and

crushed them—purchased whole stocks of men who were about to fail dabbled in bubbles, and sometimes got one up himself; and thus, by sacrificing conscience, and contemning every just and manly feeling, his wealth increased, until, at the period of which this history treats, he was “a £200,000 man.”

“Now,” said Charles, on reaching this man’s residence, “I must leave the matter entirely in your hands; conduct it as you please, and make what arrangement you please.”

“Very well,” returned Mr. Campbell: who, having ascertained that Lumplon was at home, sent in his card, and they were immediately afterwards ushered into the presence of a hard-mouthed, gross, repulsive looking man, sitting at a table, with a cash-box, a bill-book, and a pile of bills before him.

“Mr. Lumplon, I believe, I have the pleasure to address,” said Mr. Campbell.

“Well,” said Lumplon, gruffly; “what’s your business?”

“I have called on account of the Lejunes——”

“Then you have called on account of two dishonourable men.”

“Nay, nay—not so,” said Mr. Campbell, mildly.

“I say,” cried Lumplon, “that every man is a dishonourable man whose bills are dishonoured! Have you come to take this one up.”

“No, not exactly to take it up——”

“Then, what have you come for?”

“To see if some arrangement could be made——”

“Some arrangement! Pay me the amount of that bill, in hard cash, sir! That’s the only arrangement that can be made. But why did they send you? Why didn’t they come here themselves?”

“One has been driven by his losses to distraction——”

“Distraction!” cried Lumplon, with a sneer. “Which is that?”

“Richard.”

“And where is he?”

“We can’t ascertain.”

“Oh! he’s off! Gone! Run away from his creditors! I thought as much. But we’ll ferret him out. We’ll advertise him, to begin with.”

“He has, already, been advertised.”

“By whom?”

“His friends have sent advertisements to all the daily papers——”

“Indeed. Very clever; mighty clever! And do you mean to insult me, by supposing that I’m fool enough not to see through that? It’s meant for a blind, but it can’t blind me!”

“I can assure you,” said Charles——

“I want none of your assurance. I want my money, and will have it! We’ll find him! He shan’t escape us! If he’s above ground we’ll have him. And, pray, where’s the other?”

“At home,” replied Mr. Campbell; “at home, on a bed of sickness.”

“Then I’ll have him off his bed of sickness!”

“But surely, you would not think——”

“What’s he to me? I want my money! and, if it’s not paid before

twelve to-morrow, I'll arrest him. It's all very well, and very convenient to be ill, but it won't do for me. I'll not have it! I'll not be robbed at this rate! I'll not be robbed at all!"

"There's no intention to rob you in this case," said Charles.

"What care I for the intention, if it's done?" cried Lumplon. "Every man robs who doesn't take up his bills; every man, in every case who doesn't pay twenty shillings in the pound, sir, is a robber!"

"I fear," said Mr. Campbell, "that in this case you will have to take ten, if not less."

"Ten! I'll have twenty! That's what you've come for, then! That's the arrangement you'd like me to make! I'll have twenty shillings in the pound, sir! One, perhaps, is pretty well done up, now; but the other can pay it, and shall. Ten shillings in the pound—ten devils! Tell him from me, that unless, to begin with, this bill is paid in full before twelve o'clock to-morrow, the law shall take its course."

"He is too ill," said Charles, "to be spoken to on the subject."

"I don't care a button about his being ill. He may pretend to be as ill as he likes: the bill is due, and the money I'll have."

"When will the next become due?" inquired Charles.

"In fourteen days," replied Lumplon.

"Well," continued Charles, "if you'll wait another day, I'll endeavour to get the amount of that which is due."

"What's the use of driving things off from day to day? Besides, where are you to get the money?"

"Why, rather than Mr. Lejeune should be disturbed, I'd endeavour to induce my father to advance it."

"Is your father a rich man?"

"He's rich enough to do that."

"Well now, mark me. I'm not to be trifled with. I'll wait another day, in order to show that I've no inclination to be harsh; but if you deceive me, down comes the law upon Lejeune with all its force."

Thus ended their interview with the man who wished to show that he had no disposition to be harsh!

"Well," said Charles, on leaving the house, "what do you think of him for a beauty?"

"He's a brute!" replied Mr. Campbell, "a hog! I'm disgusted. What's a man to do with such a beast? But can you manage to get this money in time?"

"I've no doubt of it; I feel quite sure that I can: and then we shall have fourteen days to think about how the next bill is to be managed. Did you notice the frightful expression of his countenance when you spoke of ten shillings in the pound?"

"I did."

"I'll have twenty—twenty shillings in the pound! And with such men the idea of twenty shillings in the pound appears to comprehend all the virtues. They seem to imagine that he who pays 'twenty shillings in the pound' performs the whole duty of man: no matter what sort of a man he may be—however profligate, however dishonourable, however vile—he is, in their view, a good man, if he can pay 'twenty

shillings in the pound;’ whereas, he who, from any cause, ever paid less, must necessarily be, as that wretch said, a robber! ‘Twenty shillings in the pound,’ like charity, will indeed ‘cover a multitude of sins.’ Affection, piety, generosity, honour, friendship, love, and truth, are nothing compared with ‘twenty shillings in the pound.’ It is correct, in a commercial point of view, to attach importance to it, of course; but then the only distinction drawn by men like that bear, between a really honest man and a rogue is that which is involved in his power to pay this ‘twenty shillings in the pound.’”

“You are right,” said Mr. Campbell; “quite right. The idea of Lejeune, for instance, being denounced as a robber, when there is not a more honourable man in existence. Poor fellow! This is, indeed, a heavy blow. But, then, he has talent and standing. His professional reputation is equal to the fortune he has lost.”

“Doubtless,” said Charles, “as far as he is concerned; but he regards that fortune as his daughter’s. It is chiefly that which weighs him down; but, if we can manage to get him over this, I have no fear of a provision for her.”

They now reached Lejeune’s, and having ascertained from Mr. Raymond that his patient continued in precisely the same state, and that, therefore, it would be better for them not to see him then, Charles took his leave, went to dine with Dr. Greene, and started that night by the mail.

CHAPTER V.

THE MANIFESTATION OF LOVE.

DURING the absence of Charles from the Hall, George had been endeavouring to win the affections of Juliana: not that he loved her, that, with him, was out of the question entirely; but because he conceived that by his union with her, he should acquire more influence over Sir John.

He did not directly propose to her, nor did he verbally hint that he intended to propose; but he paid her the most marked attention; accompanied her and the Widow in their drives; pressed her hand while assisting her to alight; joined her while walking in the garden; presented bouquets, and glanced and sighed—in short, he did all in his power to induce her to believe that he was never really happy but in her presence.

To Juliana, this was very annoying. She did not like the man; independently of which she had made a discovery, which was, that she dearly loved Charles.

“How extremely polite Mr. George has become,” said the Widow, with one of her playful smiles, while Charles was on his road to the Hall.

"He is very attentive," observed Juliana.

"Attentive! He has really become quite gallant. To what, dear, can we ascribe the change?"

"I really cannot tell," said Juliana; "can you?"

"I can guess, dear! I think that I can guess."

"What then do you imagine it to be?"

"Merely your presence, my dear, nothing more."

"My presence cannot surely have such an effect?"

"It has had, dear, rest assured of that. And yet," she added, archly, "you do not appear to appreciate his politeness very highly."

"I hope that I exhibit no discourtesy," said Juliana.

"No, dear, no absolute discourtesy; but you manifest no warmth of feeling; you give him no encouragement whatever."

"Why should I?" enquired Juliana.

"I think that I can tell, my dear, why you should not."

"Indeed! well now, why should I not?"

"Because, dear, your heart is not his."

"That is true," said Juliana, "very true."

"Your heart," pursued the Widow, "belongs to another."

"Indeed!" said Juliana, whose face and neck became crimson, "Indeed I know nothing whatever about it."

The Widow smiled and kissed her, and then said in tones of deep affection, "I know of no man more worthy of you."

Juliana now knew that her secret had been in some way revealed. How she had revealed it she had then no conception; but the fact of the Widow having perceived it, more firmly convinced her that she really loved; and when Charles in the morning arrived at the Hall, she felt so embarrassed, so deeply confused, that she knew not in what way to welcome him back.

"Now," said he, as he pressed her hand, "the first thing that you want to know is, why your papa is not with me. I'll, therefore, explain at once. The case is not decided."

"He is well, I hope?" enquired Juliana.

"Better than he has been. He has not been well. The journey was too suddenly undertaken. I have to go up to town again to-night."

"To-night!" cried Juliana.

"Yes; by the mail: so you may form some idea of what an important case it is."

"Why didn't you write, Charles?" enquired Sir John.

"I've been so much engaged," replied Charles, "that I really have not had time. But that little affair," he added, "you wished me to see about: perhaps I had better explain it to you now."

"I wish you would," returned Sir John, who at once led the way to the library. "Well," he added, "now then, what's all this about?"

Charles then proceeded to relate all that had occurred; but when he had arrived at that part of the narration which referred to the disappearance of Richard Lejeune, Sir John stopped him.

"What sort of a man is he?" he eagerly enquired.

"In appearance do you mean?"

"Yes."

"A fine, tall, gentlemanly fellow," replied Charles, "with a noble voice, and a commanding presence."

"With large grey whiskers?"

"Unusually large."

"Good God!" cried Sir John. "The very man! Why he was here!"

"Here!" exclaimed Charles.

"He came here the very morning after you left."

"I see," said Charles: "he started at once and travelled all night. I see. Well! and what did he say?"

"I'll tell you; I was alone, the women were out for a drive, when up dashed a carriage and four. The door was opened, and the very man whom you have just described, alighted, and enquired for me. He was ushered in, and then in a loud, commanding voice, he thus began:—'I have the honour to address Sir John Croly, of Croly Hall!' I bowed, of course, and offered him a chair. 'You, Sir John Croly, of course,' he continued, 'can have no personal knowledge of me: I am the Emperor of China, and I want my illustrious brother, who is here, to assist me in negotiating a loan for the purpose of enabling me at once to expel the barbarous English from my empire.' Well! I scarcely knew what to say; but I ventured to hint that I thought it strange that the Emperor of China should come to England to negotiate a loan for the expulsion of the English! 'Psha!' he exclaimed, 'In England loans can be raised for any earthly purpose; but none are raised so readily as those which are intended for the destruction of the liberties of man! *Christian England*,' he added, 'will lend money to force men to repudiate their faith in the Great Redeemer! But where is this illustrious relative of mine?' he continued, 'where is he? I command his immediate presence!' 'I'll endeavour to bring him to your majesty,' said I. 'But perhaps,' I added, 'your majesty will honour me by taking a glass of wine?' 'With all my heart!' he replied, and I ordered the wine; and while he was helping himself, I slipped out and enquired of the post-boys if they knew anything of him; but no—all they knew was that he arrived at the Angel that morning, and that they were ordered to drive him here. Well, as true as I'm alive, Charles, I didn't know what to do. That he was a lunatic I could have no doubt, but who he was, I of course had no idea. At length it struck me that I ought to take him to Dr. Briggs, who had then two or three insane patients I knew; and this no sooner occurred to me than I resolved on re-entering the room, and addressing him again as 'your majesty,' which seemed to do very well, right or wrong. I accordingly re-entered, and informed his majesty that I would conduct him to his illustrious relation, if his majesty would condescend to allow me to do so. This appeared to meet his views, and I ordered my horse; and when his majesty had taken another glass of wine, he allowed me to conduct him to his carriage. He wished me to enter with him: but that wouldn't do. I excused myself with all humility, and mounted and rode by the side of the carriage until it stopped, by my direction,

at the house of Dr. Briggs. Fortunately the Doctor was at home, and having briefly explained to him how the case stood, I introduced him to his majesty, who was at once conducted to a room in which I left him, impressed with the idea of his being a prisoner of war !”

“Then,” said Charles, “he used no violence ?”

“None whatever. When the Doctor informed him that the safety of the British empire demanded his temporary incarceration, he replied, ‘Well, well; I submit to my fate’—as tranquilly as if nothing had occurred.

“Then he is there still ?”

“Yes; and the Doctor is making every effort to discover who he is.”

“Well !” said Charles, “thank God he is safe. Does Miss Lejeune know anything of this ?”

“No; nor have I told Mrs. Wardle. I would not mention it, fearing it might alarm them.”

“It is fortunate they happened to be out at the time. Had Juliana seen him, the consequences might have been frightful.”

“Then you think with me that this is the man ?”

“No doubt of it; I can have no doubt; but in order that we may be sure, we’ll ride over presently and see him.”

“We will,” said Sir John, “we will. Now proceed. You have told me what occurred up to the time of Richard Lejeune’s disappearance. Now go on.”

Charles continued; he explained all minutely, and when he had stated the result of his interview with Lumplon, he asked Sir John whether he had done right or wrong.

“Right, my boy”—replied Sir John—quite right. You shall have the money. And now,” he added, “go to the women, or they may suspect that something has happened which we are anxious to conceal.”

Charles accordingly left the library, and found Juliana looking even more embarrassed than before.

“Well,” said he, with his usual gaiety, “how do you ladies propose to spend the day ?”

“In any way you may suggest,” replied the Widow—“with this stipulation—that it be in your society.”

“Really,” said Charles, bowing, “your politeness cannot fail to be appreciated. But,” he added, turning to Juliana, “have *you* no compliment to pay me ?”

“We are in partnership,” said the Widow, taking Juliana’s arm. “What one says, the other means. Is it not so, dear ?”

Juliana smiled slightly, and blushed.

“Then,” said Charles, conceiving that Juliana had some suspicion that all was not right, “I must beg of you to dissolve that partnership—for five minutes at least. I have something to say to that partner of yours, which is not quite necessary for you to hear.”

“About home, I suppose,” said the Widow, archly. “Well ! it’s hardly fair to separate us; but I’ll spare her for five minutes : mind !—no more !”

Charles smiled and drew Juliana's arm in his, and then led her into the garden.

"Well," said he, gaily, "have you enjoyed yourself during my absence?"

"Much;" replied Juliana tremulously. "Sir John and Mrs. Wardle are exceedingly kind."

"They are both good creatures," said Charles. "But how is it you are not gay this morning? You look so pensive! Are you not happy?"

"Oh yes, indeed!"—exclaimed Juliana, fervently—"I am indeed very, very happy!"

"Then why look so sad? Is it because your papa is not here?"

"No, it is not that: indeed it is not.—But," she added, recollecting herself, "I should have been much pleased had he been able to return with you."

"So should I!" said Charles. "But if the fact of his not being here be not the cause of your looking so serious, what is the cause?"

"Do I look unusually serious?"

"Of course you do! I like to see you merry!—I like to see you smile! There! now you look like yourself again! By your looking so pensive, I feared that you were not happy!"

"I am happy"—returned Juliana—"indeed most happy, believe me. But are you really going to leave us again this evening?"

"I must, this business is of the most urgent character."

"I wish it were settled," said Juliana.

"So do I, with all my heart!" returned Charles.

"When do you think it will be settled?"

"In a few days, I hope."

"What is the nature of the case?"

"It is a case which threatens to involve in ruin two highly respectable men. But come," he added playfully, not wishing to be pressed on this subject, "we have exceeded the time allowed! We shall be scolded by your partner! By the way she appears to be most ardently attached to you."

"She is a dear good soul," said Juliana, "I love her."

Now while they were thus conversing in the garden, Sir John was intent on ascertaining the cause of Juliana's embarrassment, which, of course, he had noticed.

"What's the matter with Miss Lejeune this morning?" said he to the Widow. "She does not appear to be in very high spirits!"

"She is happy enough," replied the Widow, with a smile.

"She didn't appear to me to be particularly happy just now!"

"You mean when Mr. Charles arrived."

"Exactly; she looked so confused!"

"Perhaps his arrival was the cause of that confusion?"

"Eh—what—why, you don't mean that?"

"Mean what, Sir John?"

"Why, that his arrival was the cause of her embarrassment."

"I said, perhaps it was the cause."

"Well, but Mrs. Wardle—now look here—when I talk to you, I talk, you know, to a woman of experience. Now do you mean to say that they love each other?"

"No, Sir John; I don't say that they do."

"Well, but what do you think?"

"I think that they are worthy of each other."

"Yes, yes; but that's not what I mean. Do you think that they really love each other?"

"I'll tell you, Sir John, what I know: I know that she loves *him*; but whether he loves her or not, I don't know."

Oh, that's it—she loves *him*. Well, I'm not surprised at it; but do you think that he ever induced her to believe that he loves *her*?"

"I don't think that he ever did."

"Never told her that he loved her?—never—you know what I mean—never proposed?"

"I know, Sir John, that he never did."

"Well, what do you think of it? I speak to you in confidence: what is your opinion?"

"My opinion is, that a more gentle, amiable creature never lived. I have had opportunities of testing her character, and the result has convinced me that there cannot on earth breathe a spirit more pure."

Tears sprang into the eyes of Sir John, for he thought of his wife, whom heaven had claimed, and whose spirit he believed to be too pure for earth.

"Well," said he, having somewhat subdued his emotion, "we'll talk this matter over another time; but not a word on the subject to her. Here they come! Now, then," he added, addressing Charles as he entered, "have you ordered the horses?"

"I have not," replied Charles; "but I will do so."

"Aye do," said Sir John; "its getting late. We are going to the Bank," he added, turning to the Widow; "but we have to make a call on the road, so that if you ladies are going for a drive, you may as well drive into the town, and then we can all come home together."

This was willingly agreed to of course; and when the horses were saddled, Sir John and Charles proceeded to the house of Dr. Briggs.

"Well," said Sir John, having introduced Charles to the Doctor, "how is your patient?"

"Very calm—very tranquil," replied the Doctor; "always talking about money. He either wants a loan, or is going to raise a loan, or knows how a loan can be raised. He and I are going into partnership. He talks about thousands as if they were farthings. He conceived a scheme this morning while we were at breakfast, by which we are to make half a million in a month! But I've not been able at present to ascertain who he is."

"My son Charles knows him well," said Sir John.

"Indeed?" said the Doctor.

"The same man," said Charles; "I am satisfied now. Will you do me the favour to let me see him?"

"Most certainly. But he is some great man, is he not?"

"He *has* been a man of great influence," replied Charles. "I suppose that he is not very violent."

"Oh, dear me, no—not at all. He is, in fact, one of the most gentlemanly men I ever met with: shall I bring him in here?"

"If you please," replied Charles. "The same man," he added, when the Doctor had left the room—"I feel convinced. Poor fellow! Wealth, ambition, religion, or love! If a man be an enthusiast in either, he is lost. I wonder whether he'll know me."

"Hush!" said Sir John, "here he is;" and Richard Lejeune hastily entered with the Doctor.

"Oh, oh!" said he, addressing Charles; "Well, how does he get on with those shares?"

"Very well," replied Charles.

"That's right: I knew they would sell. Has he sent me any money?"

"A cheque," replied Charles, recollecting that he had one for 10,000*l.* in his pocket: "Here it is."

"Good—ah! ten thousand—very good. Tell him that I have two hundred more, which I'll sell him at three-and-a-half premium."

"Very well," said Charles, "I'll tell him. By-the-bye, do you know a Charles Croly?"

"Croly?—Croly?—I have heard of him. What does he want?"

"He is anxious for you to introduce him to your brother."

"My brother, sir?—My brother's dead."

"I hope not," said Charles.

"I tell you, sir, that he has been dead twenty years."

"I beg pardon," said Charles, perceiving that the Doctor wished him not to be contradicted, "I beg pardon; I thought he was alive."

"Alive! His soul still lives; I saw it the other night, and we went together to look at his bones. Why, they were just like so many honeycombs; and when we *pinched* them they crumbled into dust. But how about that loan?"

"Oh," replied Charles, "that's going on well."

"Well, I told you it would: I knew it as well—Will you dine with me to-day?"

"I must beg to be excused."

"Well, then, come to-morrow, and bring your friend with you: I like the look of him. Sir," he added, taking Sir John by the hand: "I am happy to know you. Are you *personally* acquainted with the King of France?"

"I have not that honour," replied Sir John.

"Honour, sir! why he's about the most paltry fellow in the universe. I expect to lose sixty thousand pounds by that man. Now what do you think of that? Isn't that enough, sir, to drive a man mad? When I think of it," he added, as if confidentially, "I *am* mad. But I don't allow any one to know it. No, sir, I *have* been a fool; but I'm not quite fool enough for that. Now, have you anything more to say to me?"

"No," replied Charles, "except that I shall call upon Mr. Lejeune"

"Lejeune! Lejeune! Don't call upon him. I know him. He's a

villain! he ruined his brother. I would not be tortured with that man's reflections for worlds. Good morning," he added; "I have to draw up a prospectus. Good morning."

He then left the room in haste, closely followed by the Doctor, during whose absence Sir John and Charles stood and looked at each other, but spoke not a word.

"You mentioned the name of Lejeune," said Dr. Briggs, on his return. "He is constantly speaking of Lejeune, but always with an expression of contempt."

"His name is Lejeune," observed Charles, "and his losses—in which he involved his brother—have thus affected his mind."

"I understand," said the Doctor; "I see. I shall now know how to act. Has his brother been utterly ruined?"

"Not utterly," replied Charles: "the whole of his property is lost, but he has a profession."

"What is he?"

"A barrister?"

"What, *the* Lejeune, of whose powerful advocacy we hear so much?"

"The same."

"Do you think," said Sir John, "that his insanity is likely to be permanent?"

"No, I do not," replied the Doctor; "I do not. Had he been the cause of his brother's *death*, his recovery would have been much more hopeless; but as it is—as the ruin he has caused may yet be repaired—all we have to do, I apprehend, is to inspire him with the conviction that his brother is again prosperous and happy. This will be a work of time, doubtless, but I have no fear of bringing him round eventually."

"Then," said Charles, "you will undertake the charge of him?"

"With pleasure."

"Very well. Then in your hands I leave him. I shall frequently have the pleasure of seeing you, and of course I shall feel happy to hear of any favourable change."

"Every care shall be taken of him," said the Doctor. "He shall have the best treatment my experience can suggest."

"I leave him," said Charles, "entirely in your hands, and that with the most perfect confidence."

He and Sir John then took leave of the Doctor, re-mounted their horses, and proceeded to the Bank; and when arrangements had been made for Charles to receive the sum required in London the following morning, they joined the Widow and Juliana, who had been driving about the town, and with them returned to the Hall.

During their drive Juliana had marvelled greatly at the Widow's silence on the subject which then engrossed all her thoughts. She expected that the Widow would have asked her, why Charles had led her into the garden? what he had to explain? the nature of their private conversation? and so on: but as the Widow had been enjoined by Sir John not to allude to the subject, and as Juliana dared not allude to it herself, not a word having reference to it passed.

The dinner hour arrived, but George did not join them: he, in the early part of the morning, heard that Charles had returned, but he did not appear. They therefore sat down without him, and Charles endeavoured by all means at his command to dispel that embarrassment under which Juliana still laboured. And in this, to a certain extent, he succeeded, but not effectually: she tried to look gay, but that there was something beneath the surface of that gaiety, was a fact which she could not conceal.

"Do you think," said Sir John, when she and the Widow had retired, "that Miss Lejeune has the slightest suspicion that all is not right at home?"

"I thought so before we went out," replied Charles, "and therefore took her into the garden, for the purpose of ascertaining if it were so; but I don't believe now that she has the slightest conception of there being anything wrong."

"She appears to be so serious, so thoughtful, so confused to-day. How do you account for it?"

"I can't account for it. Perhaps the continued absence of her father is the cause."

"Is she very fond of her father?"

"Very: she is indeed devoted to him."

"She is then the same gentle, amiable, affectionate girl at home that she appears to be here?"

"Just the same."

"Well," said Sir John thoughtfully, "that's right. Pass the wine. Poor Lejeune's affection for her, I suppose, is intense."

"She appears to be all the world to him."

"Then why is he thus struck down? If she be all the world to him, why should the loss of his money so deeply affect him, seeing that he has her still?"

"But for her that loss would never have weighed him down. Had *she* not been in existence, it would never have preyed upon *his* mind. I know him too well to imagine for one moment that he would allow the loss of his money to afflict him thus, were it not for the fact of his regarding that money as hers and not his own."

"Well," said Sir John, who was evidently anxious to touch upon some point which he scarcely knew how to approach, "there is certainly a great deal in that."

"Were it not for that," pursued Charles, "*he'd* care but little about the money. The profits of one-half his practice would always be sufficient for him. Nor would he care so much about the loss even now, if his brother were in a position of affluence; but as he is struck down, and as she has no other relation upon earth of whom she has the slightest knowledge, to fly to for protection in the event of her father's death, he naturally feels as every man must feel, that to leave a young creature like that unprotected at least, if not in a state of destitution, would be one of the heaviest calamities that could befall her."

"But don't you think," returned Sir John, "that a good girl like her—so amiable, so elegant, and so accomplished—could always,

either with or without a fortune, secure a highly respectable home?"

"You ask me that question, I am convinced," replied Charles, "merely in order to hear how I shall answer it. But *you* don't require an answer. You know that there are hundreds of young creatures equally amiable, equally elegant, and equally accomplished, who are now in a state of degradation, oppressed and trampled upon by those to whom they cannot but feel that they are infinitely superior, and groaning with the conviction that poverty *and* virtue have reduced them to a state of slavery the most galling."

"Well," said Sir John, "that's true; that's true; pass the wine; that's very true. Then she has no relations?"

"None; with the exception of her uncle Richard."

"And he has no children?"

"He never was married."

"Well, that's a blessing, as far as it goes. But, has she no lover? —No one who is paying his addresses to her?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"What do you think?"

"I think not: in fact I feel sure that she has not."

"How do you account for that?"

"I can't, of course, account for it."

"No, but I can."

"You can?" said Charles, fixing his eyes upon Sir John with the most intense earnestness, "you can?"

"Yes," replied Sir John.

"But how; how can you account for it?"

"The man whom she loves, Charles, is too blind to see it."

"Well, but who is he? Who is this man? I'd no idea of anything of the kind! Who is he?"

"I know him," replied Sir John with a smile; "I know him."

"Any one about here?"

"Yes."

"What, one of the young Whites?"

"No."

"One of the Balshalls?"

"No; I don't believe you'd guess right in a month."

"But I want to know who he is."

"Why are you so anxious to know?"

"Why, of course, her father left her under your protection?"

"Of course he did; but he did n't leave her affections under my protection! If a girl chooses to fall in love I can't avoid it! Besides, he upon whom her affections are fixed is a man whom I believe to be worthy of her, Charles!"

"Then, he can't be one of those fellows about here. Is it George? —Is he the man?"

"No; but I wonder that *you* never thought of her."

"Thought of her! I have thought of her; I am thinking of her continually. We have been like brother and sister; she ought to be mine."

"Well, but have you ever named the subject to her?"

"Never."

"Never proposed to her?"

"That I should never have thought of doing, without first consulting you."

"Well, but would you marry a girl, merely because she and you happen to have lived together like brother and sister, without absolutely loving her?"

"I do love her!—No man can love her more than I do."

"Then why not mention the matter before?"

"Because I was a fool, and never thought it necessary to do so. I have long regarded her as being virtually mine, although I never breathed a syllable to her on the subject. But who is this fellow?"

"I'll tell you, Charles; now that I know what your feelings are, I'll tell you:—Being anxious to ascertain the real cause of her embarrassment, this morning, when you arrived, I spoke to Mrs. Wardle about it, while you were in the garden, and, in answer to my inquiries, she told me plainly, but, of course, confidentially, that the sole cause of Miss Lejeune's embarrassment was your arrival, and that you were the man whom she loved."

"Why of course!" exclaimed Charles, feeling greatly relieved.

"Then you are not surprised at it?"

"Surprised! Not at all. I always felt that she loved me. I have looked upon her as being just as much mine as if the whole matter had been arranged. Don't attribute this feeling of confidence to vanity: ascribe it to a species of instinct if you will,—for I felt as secure as I could have felt had she given me ten thousand proofs of her love."

"Well," said Sir John, "then it appears to be all settled."

"You were pleased to say just now," said Charles, "that he upon whom her affections are fixed is a man whom you believe to be worthy of her. I am proud of having inspired that belief. But is there one in the world whom you'd like that man to have in preference to her?"

"No, Charles, no!" replied Sir John; "I believe you to be worthy of each other. And I'll make you both happy, my boy!—for you are *my* boy, and always were. But now," he continued, as Charles took his hand and pressed it warmly, "we must not be too fast: we must go very quietly to work, and then all will be well. The cause of Lejeune's extreme depression is, doubtless, as you have stated, the fear of his daughter being left comparatively destitute and unprotected. That cause can now be entirely removed. You will see in the morning how he is: you will set his mind at rest on the subject of the over-due bill, and if you find an opportunity, you can delicately mention the other matter, and propose for her at once. Until, however, this has been done, don't say a single word on the subject to her. You have not time this evening to say much; but don't say anything: don't in any way allude to it. I have my reasons for wishing you not. And now," he added, rising, "it's time for you to think about the mail. We'll just go up and have a cup of coffee, and then I'll go with you to the inn."

As they entered the drawing-room, Juliana rose, and with manifest

timidity enquired of Charles if he really meant to leave them. Charles took her hand, and said he was compelled to go, with an expression which inspired her with joy.

"We were induced," said the Widow, archly, "by your keeping from us so long, to hope that you had altered your mind."

"He would not leave," observed Sir John, "if he were not compelled, I know! Now," he added, "we only want one cup of coffee, and then we'll start."

"But *you* are not going?" exclaimed the Widow.

"Only to see him off," replied Sir John. "The carriage, I hear is now at the door."

"Really," said the Widow, "you quite startled me: I began to fear that we should lose you!"

Sir John looked at her and smiled, as she poured out the coffee. What was passing in his mind at the time, he never explained; but it was perfectly evident that he was thinking about something! And so was Charles;—aye! and so was Juliana, who met his glance constantly and blushed, while to him she never appeared to look so beautiful before.

"Now, then,—now, my boy, time's up," said Sir John. And Charles rose, and shook hands with the Widow, and lingered behind as she and Sir John left the room, and then took the hand of Juliana, and pressed it, and *kissed* it, and then exclaimed fervently, "God bless you!"

"God bless you." The kiss had an electric effect, which in an instant subsided; but "God bless you!" sank into her heart.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DECLARATION.

THE fact of Charles having left town, and the cause had been communicated to Lejeune by Dr. Greene; and although, as he said, there was no absolute necessity for it, seeing that he could immediately have raised the sum required, the generous anxiety evinced by Sir John and Charles at once affected and relieved him.

When, therefore, Charles entered the chamber in which he was lying, apparently in a state of exhaustion—for although he had somewhat rallied, he was still extremely languid—he pressed his hand and said, "Charles, your noble generosity and the kindness of Sir John quite unman me. But how did you leave my poor girl?"

"Well—quite well"—replied Charles—"and happy."

"Then she has no knowledge of this sad affair?"

"Not the slightest."

"Poor girl! she will know it too soon."

"I see no necessity for her knowing it at all."

"How can we contrive to conceal it from her?"

"I'll explain," replied Charles with a smile, "but not now: we'll talk about that by-and-bye."

Lejeune looked at him earnestly for a moment, and appeared to wonder why he smiled.

"All will yet be well," resumed Charles. "If you will but suffer your mind to be at ease and recover your strength, all will yet be well."

Lejeune moved his head mournfully, and after a pause said, "Have you seen my brother?"

"He's not in town," replied Charles. "It is supposed he has left in order to avoid the importunities of those by whom he has been involved."

"Oh, he should have met them," said Lejeune. "He should have met them. To fly from a difficulty is but to tempt it to follow with increased force. Have you seen that man Lumplon this morning?"

"Not yet: I'm now going. I merely called here first to see how you were."

"You have been troubling Sir John on my account: and of course I appreciate his friendship and yours; but I wish that you had not gone down: Ross, the stockbroker, would have got it for me at once. Perhaps you will do me the favour to call upon him now?"

"I have the money with instructions to apply it to this purpose, and I must of course act upon those instructions."

"Well, well. It shall soon be returned. You'll not be gone long?"

"Not an hour," replied Charles, who again pressed his hand and left, to call upon his amiable friend Lumplon.

"Well," said Lumplon, with his characteristic sweetness of expression as Charles entered the room—in which he was engaged in precisely the same interesting manner as before—"have you brought me the money?"

"I have," replied Charles.

"Oh," said Lumplon, with an accomplished grunt. "Very well. Where is it?"

Charles handed the notes to him, which he carefully counted, and then said, in tones just as sweet as before, "Now then—the noting;" and when Charles paid him for that he added, "Now the interest. Let me see. Four days. Three thousand—hundred and fifty a-year—eight and twopence three farthings a-day—four days—I want one pound twelve and eleven pence."

"Anything more?" inquired Charles, again drawing out his purse.

"More? No. You'd have robbed me of the interest I suppose?"

"Robbed you!" said Charles, contemptuously.

"Robbed! yes, robbed! There's no bandbox at all about me! I say robbed: and what is it better than a robbery to keep back money that's due?"

"Why you incomprehensible hog!" cried Charles, "I never thought of it."

"Didn't you? I *did*, you see; which makes all the difference. But don't put yourself in a passion. It's no go! I'm not to be done."

"Who wants to do you? But it's of no use to talk to a man like you."

"Who asked you to talk? I don't want you to talk: I want my money; that's all I want of you."

"How much do you say?"

"I told you once. One pound, twelve, and eleven pence."

Charles gave him one pound thirteen, which he counted and examined minutely; when, fixing upon a shilling, he said, "What! do you want to palm bad money upon me? Look at that."

"Well," said Charles, looking at the shilling, "that's a good one."

"Is it? then keep it, and give me another."

Charles, whose patience was nearly exhausted, gave him another, and then received the bill.

"Now let him recollect," said Lumplon, "that these bills fall due one after another like life, with only fourteen days between 'em; and if they're not paid at the time, down comes the law. I'm not going to wait for the money day after day, as I've done in this case, and then be called an incomprehensible hog as a reward for my kindness. I'll have the money when the money's due; and if ever you dare to bring fellows here again to talk to me about their ten shillings in the pound, or even nineteen and eleven pence three farthings, I'll have 'em kicked out of the house."

"You may think yourself fortunate," said Charles, "that the acceptor of these bills is an honourable man."

"An honourable man, when his very first bill was dishonoured?"

"To honour a bill is merely a conventional term; but like all of your caste, you confound that term with the sentiment of honour."

"I like the term just as well as the sentiment."

"No doubt, and much better: for a rogue is not an honourable man, and yet a rogue may honour his bill. But I say again that you may think yourself fortunate that Mr. Lejeune is an honourable man; for if he were not, having just enough to take up these bills and no more, and having had, as you are aware, no consideration for those bills—not even to the amount of a shilling—he'd put his twenty thousand pounds in his pocket and go abroad, instead of staying here to impoverish himself by giving it to a man like you."

"Oh! he would, would he? Oh! then I couldn't stop him?"

"No! you've no claim on him, nor can you have until the next bill becomes due."

"Have you anything else to say?"

"Yes," replied Charles; "I want my change."

"What change?"

"My change out of the one pound thirteen."

"Oh! the penny?" said Lumplon; "I have no halfpence."

"Then send for some. To use your own words, a man must be a robber to keep back that which is due!"

Lumplon twisted his mouth into all sorts of shapes, as he searched every pocket he had about him. He did however eventually find a penny, which he handed to Charles, who took it, of course, and then, without ceremony, left him.

"I wonder," thought Charles as he quitted the house, "whether that

man expects to go to heaven. I don't suppose he thinks much about it, but if he had George to talk to him a little, he might, I think, be induced to tremble. I'll ask George when I go down again, what he'd give for that man's chance. And yet, how many thousands are there who have an equal chance with him!—who care not whom they crush to enrich themselves, and who nevertheless call themselves Christians!"

Having promised to return within the hour, Charles went back at once to Lejeune, whom he still found languid, but calm.

"Well," said he, pressing his hand again warmly, "you look more composed: you feel somewhat revived, do you not?"

"Slightly," replied Lejeune, "slightly. I have been thinking," he added, "during your absence, about what you said to me this morning when you smiled. You said that you would explain to me how this heavy loss might be effectually concealed from the knowledge of Juliana. Now, how can it be done? She must necessarily know of it some time or other."

"Not necessarily," returned Charles; "but I'll proceed to explain. My father and I had a long conversation on this subject last evening, and we came to this conclusion—that the cause of the loss of this money pressing so heavily upon your mind, is attributable almost solely to the fact of your having regarded the money as hers."

"It was hers: I saved it for her," said Lejeune.

"Well," resumed Charles, "we then thought that if you were relieved of all anxiety on her account, as far as pecuniary matters are concerned, the cause of your depression being thus removed, the effect of that cause would soon cease to exist."

"What do you mean?" inquired Lejeune, with an expression of intense anxiety.

"I love Juliana," replied Charles calmly, "but with all the fervour of truth: I love her ardently, and have long felt that we were indeed destined for each other. Her gentle bearing, the sweetness of her disposition, and the purity of her mind, are the charms by which I have been inspired; and if manly devotion, faith, honour, and truth can ensure her happiness, she shall be happy."

Lejeune took his hand and held it in his, and after a pause—during which he seemed to be lost in a reverie—said, "Does *she* know anything of this?"

"No," replied Charles, "I have never breathed a syllable to her on the subject."

"You said that you and Sir John had a long conversation. Did you explain this to him?"

"I did: he knows all. He was moreover pleased to say he believed that we were worthy of each other, and wished me at once to name the subject to you."

"Charles," said Lejeune, still pressing his hand, "you know how highly I esteem you. I do not believe that if she were yours, you would ever revert to this loss, in order to prove to her how grateful she ought to be: I do not believe that you would ever make her feel that she came to you portionless. I am convinced that you would be to her

all that a husband should be; but I can say no more until I have seen her. I am not aware that her affections are engaged: I am not aware that they have yet been awakened: I must see her, and, by causing her to develop her feelings, ascertain how her heart inclines."

"And if you discover that it inclines in that direction?"

"I shall then say, 'Take her, and be happy!'"

"Then in order," said Charles, "that you may prove this beyond all doubt, I here pledge you my honour, that until you have seen her, I'll neither say a word to her on the subject, nor even hint at the nature of this conversation. But when," he added, "when do you think you will be able to undertake the journey?"

Lejeune shook his head, and faintly smiled.

"Make up your mind to recover at once," pursued Charles, with the view of inspiring him with more lively feelings. "Make up your mind to it, and then we shall very soon be able to return together."

"Charles," said Lejeune, "my constitution has been by a series of domestic afflictions so impaired, that I can hope to recover only by slow degrees. It is not alone the exhaustion which the recent excitement has induced: I have a chronic affection of the heart, which, when I am prostrate, renders restoration very tardy indeed. Some time must elapse before I shall be able to get about again; and as Juliana must in a very few days know the cause of my prolonged absence from her, it will perhaps be better to write to her at once and let her know, Charles, that I am not well."

"I have already told her that you are not well; but I certainly at the same time led her to believe that you would in a few days rejoin her."

"Exactly. But she had better be told that I am not at all likely to do so. Besides, Charles, I wish her to be near me."

"Shall I go and bring her home?"

"You, of course, will not alarm her. When she hears that I am confined to my room she will, I know, be anxious to return; and when she expresses that anxiety, why you need not endeavour to induce her to remain."

"I quite understand. I'll start to-night."

"I don't like night travelling, Charles. You were travelling all last night."

"Oh, that's a matter of no consequence! Besides, we get in at four o'clock! I can therefore have a good five hours' sleep at the inn before I go on to the Hall."

"Well, Charles, well: I must leave it to you. But let me see you again before you go."

"I will," replied Charles, who then took his leave, and went to call upon Dr. Greene with the view of explaining to him how he had discovered Richard.

Dr. Greene, who belonged to that very select caste whose elegant manners add lustre to learning, and who was at once a philosopher and a gentleman—a combination, of which posterity perhaps may have the pleasure of finding the fossil remains—received him with the most refined courtesy. Charles indeed had become quite a favorite of the doc

tor; and, although they had dined together but once, and had been perfect strangers up to the period of Richard Lejeune's disappearance, they now were as frank and as friendly, and understood each other as well as if they had been in the habit of associating for years.

"Well," said Charles, having explained where Richard was, and how he got there, "now what would you advise?"

"When do you return?"

"To-night."

"To-morrow's Sunday;—I'll go with you. If I find that the gentleman in whose charge you left him does not know exactly how to treat him, I shall advise his removal: if I find he's with a man of experience and skill, I shall then say, let him remain where he is."

"He has the reputation of being exceedingly skilful."

"In the country," said the Doctor, with a smile, "a *fortunate man* may soon obtain that. But we shall see."

"And now," said Charles, "how are we to act with the servants?—I mean, of course, the servants of Richard Lejeune."

"We had better go and give them some further instructions, in order that for the present they may remain where they are. If we tell them where he is to be found, we may as well at once tell the creditors, who imagine that he has left the country to avoid them, and of whom, the majority I understand have expressed their anxiety to come to some terms. I saw his solicitor yesterday, when he told me that the result of his communications with them has proved that they will readily accept anything he has the power to offer."

Having conversed for some time upon the various subjects connected with Richard Lejeune's failure, they went to his house, gave the servants the necessary instructions, and then called upon his solicitor, to whom of course they explained all. They then returned to dine, and as the Doctor after dinner had a patient to see, while Charles had to call upon Lejeune, they met at the inn at the appointed time, and started together by the mail.

Now, during the whole of that day, George kept aloof from Juliana, not that he had perceived that his attentions were displeasing, but because he had received the following letter that morning from one of his old associates—by whom, when at Cambridge, he was regarded as at once the most reckless and the most brilliant fellow of them all—the contents of which letter engrossed all his thoughts:—

"DEAR GEORGE,—

"What in the name of all the Gods are you up to, buried alive as you must be down there? What are you doing? Why don't you come up, and have a spree? Come up, and spend a jolly week with us in town!—come up on Monday! We shall have a glorious week of it, old fellow! I'll send you a programme:—On Tuesday there'll be a slashing mill between the Billingsgate Beauty and the Wapping Snob—*entre nous*, the Beauty's safe!—I'm laying out six to four on him. Well: on Wednesday the St. Giles's Pet is going to run the Badger twenty miles for a hundred: on Thursday I fight a Main of Cocks against

Bandy Bill: on Friday I've a match with the Nobby Sweep to shoot at twenty pigeons, for fifty a-side; and on Saturday, my white dog, Blazer, will kill a hundred rats against Butcher Bob's Blacktail,—a dog nearly double his weight. So you see, my trump, you'll have lots of sport, and that of the right sort, too. Now, will you come? There are lots of regular Bricks in Town who would be, I know, delighted to meet you—Bricks, old fellow!—your sort, to a hair! Therefore make up your mind at once to come, and let me hear from you to-morrow.

"Yours,

"And no mistake,

"GUSTY D'ALMAINE."

That this interesting letter should have unsettled him will not appear extraordinary, when it is known that these are the very sports which he had patronised extensively while at Cambridge, and which invariably afforded him the most intense delight.

But how was he to go? That was the question. What excuse could he make to Sir John? It would be of no use to tell *him* that he wished to attend some benevolent meeting in town. No; that wouldn't do. George felt that he would immediately smell *one* rat, if he didn't the whole hundred! How, then, was he to manage? He couldn't tell. Every scheme which he conceived was found calculated to arouse the well-founded suspicions of Sir John, and it was the solution of this problem which occupied his thoughts throughout the day.

In the morning, however, when Charles returned, he was struck with an idea that the thing might be arranged through him. He therefore made up his mind to name it the first opportunity, and then went as usual to church.

In the meantime Charles introduced Dr. Greene, and when he had handed him over to Sir John, he immediately joined Juliana, whom he found somewhat tremulous still.

"I did think," she observed, as he led her on to the lawn, "that you would have brought papa down with you *this* time!"

"He is not well," replied Charles. "He has had a slight attack of his old complaint."

"He is not, I hope, confined to his chamber?"

"For the *present* he is."

"Dear me!" said Juliana, with an expression of alarm; "I must return to him."

"Oh!" cried Charles, "there's no necessity for that."

"Indeed I must. I know the nature of his complaint so well that I dread being absent from him."

"Are you then a physician?" said Charles, with a smile.

"I sometimes fancy," replied Juliana, "that when he is ill, my presence soothes him."

"No doubt, no doubt," returned Charles, with a look of admiration. "But he is not *ill*—that is to say, not seriously ill. He'll very soon be all right again."

"I must, nevertheless, go," said Juliana; "I shall be extremely sorry

to leave the delightful society I have found down here, but I cannot feel really happy anywhere, with the knowledge of papa being ill."

"Well," returned Charles, "I cannot but appreciate your affection, but I really must beg of you not to be alarmed. If you desire to return—and it certainly is a very natural desire—I'll abstain from endeavouring to persuade you not to do so; but, I pledge you my honour, that there is nothing in this illness to justify the slightest apprehension. But let us hear what Mrs. Wardle says about it; however *she* will be able to part with you I can't imagine. Still, if you decide upon going, Dr. Greene returns to-morrow, and I will with pleasure accompany you with him."

"That is kind," said Juliana, "very kind; believe me, I feel it to be very kind indeed."

"Mrs. Wardle!" cried Charles, as the Widow crossed the lawn: "Mrs. Wardle, of *course*, you'll not be surprised to hear that this tiresome young lady is going to leave you?"

"Leave us!" cried the Widow; "leave us! Why—when?"

"She's off to-morrow!"

"Oh! no, no, no, no; indeed she is not."

"Indeed, indeed, dear, I must,—poor papa is very ill."

"Now, did I say very ill?" interposed Charles.

"Is he *not* very ill?" enquired the Widow.

"I said, that he had had a slight attack."

"That's another thing," resumed the Widow; "that alters the case entirely. No, dear, we cannot spare you yet; indeed, I'll not part with you!"

"Then," said Juliana, "we'll be together still."

"There's a love!" exclaimed the Widow, embracing her warmly.

"There's a dear!"

"What I mean," said Juliana, "by being together still, is, that we will go to town together. You *will* go with me, will you not?"

"I should like it dearly; but how can I leave?"

"Oh, I am sure that Sir John will spare you," replied Juliana; "I'll ask him myself."

"Well," said Charles, "if you decide upon going, Mrs. Wardle had better go with us. It will be an agreeable change for her, and I know it will be very pleasing to you."

"I'll go and ask him at once," said Juliana.

"He is," observed Charles, "now engaged with Dr. Greene. Go in and talk the matter over calmly together. I see no necessity for your going at all; still, if you decide upon going, the journey can be arranged as I stated."

He then led them in; and, while Juliana was explaining to the Widow how necessary it was for her to go to town, he went into the library, in which Sir John and Dr. Greene were conversing, of course, about Richard Lejeune.

"Mr. Croly," said the Doctor, as Charles entered, "we are going to see this poor man: will you ride over with us?"

"Well," replied Charles, "it is painful to see him, but I'll go; have you ordered the horses?"

"I have," returned Sir John, "here they are. You can mount Robert's mare; he can saddle the grey and follow us."

They then proceeded slowly to the house of Dr. Briggs, and, when Dr. Greene had been introduced to him, he conducted them into the parlour.

"Dr. Greene," said Sir John, "is poor Lejeune's physician, and being anxious to see him, he has come down with my son Charles."

"How is he?" inquired Dr. Greene.

"Why," replied Dr. Briggs, "he has not been so tranquil this morning: he has been rather violently denouncing a man named Lump-lon, whom he accuses of having robbed him of thousands. He is, however, quite calm now. I'll bring him in."

"That's not a bad sign," said Dr. Greene, during the absence of Dr. Briggs; "it shows that his reason is veering round to the point at which it left him."

Dr. Briggs now re-entered with Richard Lejeune, who no sooner saw Dr. Greene, than he violently seized him by the collar, and exclaimed, "Villain! I have got you at last!"

"Back, sir!—back!"—exclaimed Dr. Briggs, in tones of authority—"back!" and Richard at once relinquished his hold, and stepping back, burst into tears.

"Do you not know Dr. Greene?" inquired Charles.

"Yes, Doctor, yes," he replied, taking Charles's hand, "I know you well; but they treat me very cruelly here. There stands the man who has robbed me of a million, and yet they'll not allow me to strangle him!—Doctor," he added in a whisper, while looking very cautiously round, "you and I'll go together and leave them here. Don't take any notice; we'll leave them behind."

"What do you say?" inquired Dr. Briggs.

"Nothing, nothing," replied Richard, "nothing at all; nothing at all. But," he added, turning to Sir John, "what have you done with those shares?"

"I have not sold them yet," replied Sir John.

"Then sell them at once; they *must* be sold!—I want the money. As for that villain there!—Let me—let me grasp him!"

"Now," said Dr. Briggs, as he pointed to the door, "come with me;" and poor Richard Lejeune at once followed him, with all the humility of a slave.

"He is worse than I expected," said Dr. Greene—"much worse. Dr. Briggs acted quite right in taking him away. His excitement would only have increased, had he remained."

Dr. Briggs now returned, when Sir John and Charles left him with Dr. Greene and went into the garden, where Charles explained the substance of his last conversation with Lejeune, and then alluded to the affectionate anxiety of Juliana.

"Then," said Sir John, "you return with her in the morning?"

"Why, as Dr. Greene returns in the morning, we may as well accompany him."

"The Doctor appears to be a perfect gentleman."

"He is one of the most accomplished men I ever met with."

Having consulted for some time together, the Doctors repaired to the garden, and, when Dr. Briggs had promised to dine with them that day, the visitors remounted and left.

"Well," said Sir John, "what do you think of the Doctor's skill?"

"I am perfectly satisfied," replied Dr. Greene; "I believe him to be a very clever man. He is pursuing the very course which I should pursue, and I have not the slightest doubt that it will lead to the recovery of poor Lejeune."

"I am very glad to hear it," returned Sir John. "Then you think that he had better remain where he is?"

"Most certainly, I do; his removal now would tend only to increase his excitement."

As they entered the park, Charles perceiving George in the distance, clapped spurs to his horse, and approached him.

"Well, old fellow," he cried, shaking him heartily by the hand, "how are you?"

"Thank God!" replied George, "I am well."

"That's right; how are things getting on in the country?"

"The crops are looking remarkably healthy. We shall, I have no doubt, be blessed with an abundance. Do I know that gentleman whom you have just left?"

"I think not; his name is Greene—Dr. Greene. He has been with us to see poor Richard Lejeune, who is now a patient of Dr. Briggs."

"Indeed! is he seriously ill?"

"He is, George, unhappily, insane."

"Good God! To what do you ascribe his insanity?"

"To heavy pecuniary losses."

"Behold!" cried George, "the power of Mammon! The lust of wealth corrodes men's hearts; the loss of it drives them mad. They think much more of worldly losses than they do of that irrecoverable loss—the loss of their eternal souls! No worldly loss can ever drive a real Christian mad: he has but to inspire the consolations of religion to hold such calamities, as they are called, in contempt."

"Do not religious enthusiasts sometimes go mad?"

"They who are termed religious enthusiasts do, often; but they are in reality those who have been suddenly brought to a sense of their sins, of which the enormity shocks their reason."

"You should have been with me yesterday, in town," said Charles; "I went to see a man to whom I should like to hear you talk. He is just the fellow for you!—rich as Cræsus and hard as nails."

"The people in town, I fear, are more corrupt than ever."

"They are, I believe, more artful."

"I have not been in town for some time."

"Why don't you go up, occasionally?"

"I have no great desire to do so."

"Oh, it would be a change for you. What say you, now: will you go up with me in the morning?"

"Are you going again to-morrow?"

"Yes; with Miss Lejeune and Dr. Greene. Go with us?"

"Well, I should like to go with *you*; but perhaps I had better not. It might not be approved of."

"Not approved of! What, not by the governor? Nonsense! Why not?"

"He might, perhaps, object to my leaving."

"Not at all; he'll not object. Leave it to me; I'll manage that:—I'll tell him, that I want you to go up with me—which will be, indeed the truth, for I really should like you to go. I'll mention it to him after dinner."

This met George's views exactly. He knew that Charles was so great a favourite that Sir John would deny him nothing, and as the request was to come from him, the whole thing appeared to be settled.

On reaching the Hall, Sir John was met by Juliana, who took his arm affectionately, and led him across the lawn.

"You have heard," she said, "of the illness of my poor papa: you have also heard, doubtless, that I contemplate returning to town in the morning. Now—although believe me I appreciate it highly—I cannot sufficiently express to you my sense of your kindness to me since I have been here."

"Pooh, pooh!" cried Sir John. "I'll not hear a word of it! Your father can love you but little more than I do."

"You are kind," said Juliana, "very, very kind, while I am so bold that I am about to tax your kindness still farther."

"Well my dear! well!" cried Sir John, as Juliana hesitated. "Well! go on!"

"I am about to ask a very great favour."

"A very great favour, no doubt! You are just the style of person to ask a great favour. But ask and have: ask and have. Now what is it?"

"I have Sir John to ask," said Juliana "if you will allow dear Mrs. Wardle to accompany me and spend a few days with me in town."

Sir John slightly started; and looked at Juliana, and then said, "Have you named the subject to her my dear?"

"I have, Sir John," replied Juliana.

"And does she desire to go?"

"Oh yes! that is to say—and that is all I undertook to ask—if you can spare her."

"Certainly, certainly," replied Sir John. "By all means, yes: yes: certainly my dear! Run and tell her at once—run and tell her."

Juliana bounded across the lawn and Sir John went into the shrubbery.

"Now"—said he to himself confidentially—"tut, tut, tut; here's a job, tut!—She'll go up there. Well!—She'll attend him—aye! and so grateful will he be that when he recovers he'll propose, that will be the result! But that'll not do at all! I must put a stop to it! But how? I can't now refuse to let her go! And yet by consenting I consent to

her going into the lion's mouth! Well!—what's to be done? Why secure her at once. You have made up your mind not to part with her, therefore secure her at once. I will do so. I'll do it this night. Why should I allow myself to be annoyed thus? Do it and have done with it! what's the use of going on so? But I wonder whether this is the effect of an understanding between them! Pooh! nonsense! How can it be? No: it is the effect of mere chance. Still she is anxious to go up. And why? Is it to see him or to oblige Juliana? If even there be an understanding between them I cannot blame him; nor can I blame her! No breach of confidence has been committed by either. I have so far as my feelings on the subject are concerned, reposed no confidence in either. She goes however doubtless to oblige Juliana. Yet if even it be so I cannot shut my eyes to the danger involved? I must speak to her on the subject, and will. We must come to an understanding this night. Before I sleep, I'll explain what my views really are, and let her reject me if she can."

Having decided on deferring this important explanation until all the rest had retired that night; Sir John rejoined Charles and Dr. Greene, in whose society he spent the remainder of the morning, while the Widow and Juliana were busily engaged in preparing for their journey on the morrow.

At the appointed time Dr. Briggs arrived, and they shortly afterwards sat down to dinner. The Doctors were evidently delighted with each other: they did not, however, engross the whole of the conversation: Sir John and Charles came in for their share, while Dr. Greene, with the true feelings of a gentleman, addressed himself repeatedly to George, because of him the rest appeared to take very little notice.

"Well," said Charles, turning to Dr. Greene, when the ladies had retired, "what time shall we start in the morning?"

"I am anxious to be in town as early as possible," replied the Doctor.

"Then we had better start directly after breakfast?"

"If you please."

"George," resumed Charles, "I wish you'd go with us? I should like you to go. Come, old fellow, we'll all go up together—that is," he added, turning to Sir John, "if you can spare him."

"Oh—I can—*spare* him," returned Sir John, with considerable hesitation.

"Very well; then that's settled; we all go up together."

"I really have no desire to go," observed George.

"Nonsense!" cried Charles; "Four will make a pleasant travelling party; we shall just fill the carriage. Besides, you and I have never passed a day in Town together yet. Now don't say another word about it—you go."

"And while in Town," said Dr. Greene, "you will, I hope, do me the favour to make my house your home."

George bowed, and with a clever exhibition of reluctance, eventually consented to accompany them.

That Sir John did not like the idea of George going was manifest; still he offered no direct opposition, conceiving that between the Doctor and Charles, he would be kept pretty well within bounds.

On reaching the drawing-room, Sir John found means to communicate to the Widow the fact that he wished to have some conversation with her in private before she retired to rest. This did not at all amaze her; on the contrary, feeling sure that what he had to say had reference to domestic affairs, she thought it highly correct that as she was about to be for a few days absent, those affairs should be referred to before she left. When, therefore, Dr. Briggs had taken his leave for the night, she went up with Juliana, with whom she remained until she felt that Dr. Greene, Charles, and George had retired, when she returned to the drawing-room and found Sir John alone.

"Mrs. Wardle," said he, placing a chair for her near him, "you are going for the first time to leave me. Now I am anxious before you go, to communicate something which has for a long time occupied my mind."

The Widow was all attention, but marvelled what he meant.

"Do you think," he continued, "that I look much older than I did ten or twelve years ago?"

"Upon my word, Sir John," replied the Widow, smiling, "I perceive but little difference in your appearance. You have been blessed with perfect health, and have had a very excellent constitution."

"*Have* had! and have now—sound as an acorn. I really believe that I am stronger now than I was five-and-twenty years ago. But, now let us come to that point on which I feel naturally anxious to consult you."

"What can he possibly mean?" thought the Widow.

"The other day," pursued Sir John, "you told me that you knew Juliana loved Charles."

"I did," said the Widow, who now began to fancy that she could see what he meant.

"Very well. You also said that you believed them to be worthy of each other. Very good. I believed so too; I therefore embraced the very first opportunity of ascertaining what *his* feelings were towards her; and as I found that her affection was abundantly reciprocated, I advised him to speak Lejeune on the subject at once."

"I am delighted to hear it," exclaimed the Widow. "I really am delighted to hear it. This then is the cause of her immediate return?"

"Not the sole cause. It has something to do with it doubtless; but Lejeune is really ill. Well; you will hence perceive that although Juliana knows nothing whatever of what has been done, there will soon be a marriage in the family. Very good."

"Then she has no idea of the subject having been named to her papa."

"Not the slightest; nor do I wish her to have until he has seen her. Well; thus you see there is one marriage pretty nearly settled. But this is not the only marriage in the family I contemplate."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Widow.

"Oh no, I have another in view."

"Is Mr. George going to marry?"

"No; I think of marrying myself."

"Marrying again, Sir John?"

"Aye!"

"Oh, you are jesting!"

"Jesting! not at all. Why should I not marry again? Do you see any objection to it, moral or physical?"

"Why no, Sir John: I see no objection—no absolute objection. But, dear me, I never supposed that such an idea ever entered your imagination."

"Oh yes it has. And why should it not? Why should I not marry again? There is no law on earth to prevent it, and I hope there is not one against it in heaven. I repeat, that I really think of marrying again, and that is the grand point upon which I wish to consult you. Do me the favour to pass the water," he added, "I'll take a little brandy; but perhaps you will be kind enough to mix it for me?"

The Widow proceeded to do so, and while thus engaged, she experienced a variety of the drollest sensations conceivable. "He marry again!" she thought; "to whom? Why should he marry again?" She didn't like the idea at all. She couldn't approve of it.

"Thank you," said he, as she passed the glass to him. "And now we'll proceed. I have been," he continued, slowly and emphatically, "a widower, Mrs. Wardle, nearly fifteen years. It is now nearly fifteen since heaven took from me her in whom all my earthly hopes were centered, and to whom I was devotedly attached. She was an angel; but you knew her—you knew her well; you knew her virtues; you knew her worth. I must not, however, dwell upon this subject; if I do I shall, I know, be unable to proceed. Well; I have been, as I said, a widower nearly fifteen years, and during the whole of that time I have met with but *one* whom I hold to be comparable with her. That one I have known many years. Her virtues I have ever admired: her gentle, amiable disposition has long charmed me: her pure mind has eventually inspired me with love. She is a widow; and I remember, as well as if it were but yesterday, how ardently, how fervently, and with what sublime emotion her husband pressed my hand, when on his death-bed I assured him that I would take care of *her*.—Rise, my own Adelaide, rise!" he exclaimed, as she seized his hand, and, on her knees, bathed it with her tears, "rather let me clasp you to my heart!"

"My friend!" cried the Widow, with the most intense emotion, "my benefactor!—you have now overpowered me indeed!—But," she added, having somewhat recovered her composure, "however deep may be my gratitude—however strong my affection—however pure, however ardent my love for you as a brother—I never, Sir John—never can become your wife."

"Why not? why not?" enquired Sir John anxiously.

"There is a holy barrier against it," replied the Widow. "There is a solemn vow registered in heaven, which forbids it."

"Explain, my dear Adelaide, explain!"

"By the death-bed of that dear man," said the Widow, while gazing intently at Sir John through her tears, "I promised, I solemnly promised, that I never would marry again."

"Indeed! Did he enjoin that promise?"

"It was enjoined by his pure and inexhaustible love. He believed that no other could have the affection for me that he had: he feared that I might fall into unworthy hands: he felt that I had been destined for him and him alone: and as I knew his feelings—as I knew that it would soothe his last moments on earth—I gave him that promise which I held and still hold to be sacred; when he blessed me with a holy fervour, smiled, and died in peace."

"Had he any religious scruples on the subject of second marriages?"

"No, I believe not: nor do I believe that if he had for one moment contemplated this—if he had thought it at all probable that *you* would confer upon me the honour you designed—he would ever have wished me to register that vow. But why should I repine. You promised to protect me: you have most generously performed that promise, and I am grateful and happy. You have even made me the virtual mistress of your establishment. Why, what on earth can I wish for more? Your love? I feel that I have even that: I feel that you have loved me, and that you will, as a sister, love me still. What more can I hope for on earth?"

"Certainly," said Sir John, whom this promise had greatly confused, "I appreciate the motive which prompts you to reject me——"

"Pray," interrupted the Widow, "pray do not use that term. Reject you! While I live I shall honour you, pray for you, bless you!"

"I employed the term conventionally," returned Sir John. "I meant to say that I appreciate the feelings which have prompted you to hold that promise sacred. Nor will I—although I do not concede to any man the right of extorting such a promise—endeavour to tempt you to break it. I will ask you merely to reflect, not on the expediency of violating that promise, but whether, knowing his motive for enjoining it, and believing that if he had contemplated this, it never would have been enjoined—that promise is really of a character so sacred as you have hitherto imagined. Understand, your decision, if adverse, cannot diminish my affection, although I did hope to be able thus to reward your devotion. If you feel that you can conscientiously accept my offer, I shall be happy: if, on the contrary, you find on reflection, that you cannot conscientiously do so, doubt not that my affection will be equally sincere, aye, and equally lasting. And now good night. You I know require rest. Do not allow what I have said to disturb you. Good night!" he added, taking her hand and kissing it with fervour; "good night."

The Widow retired, but not immediately, to bed. On reaching her chamber she sank upon a chair, and was soon completely lost in a reverie. Sir John's declaration had amazed her. She was bewildered! She felt that nothing on earth could delight her more than the fact of her being united to *him*, but she also felt that the promise she had made must be held inviolate.

Eventually, being weary of endeavouring to reconcile conflicting thoughts, she prayed and went to bed, and having, after a time, fallen asleep, she had a dream, in which the spirit of him by whom the promise had been enjoined, appeared enveloped in a cloud of surpassing whiteness. The Recording Angel was near, and smiled as he pointed to the register; and when the Spirit had absolved her from her vow, he smiled again. Sir John then approached and looked round with an expression of wonder; and when the Spirit had joined their hands and fervently blessed them, a trumpet sounded and the vision disappeared.

She awoke in a state of perfect ecstasy; but although this was but a dream, it caused her to sleep that night no more.

In the morning all were on the *qui vive*. The Widow was thoughtful, and so was Sir John, while Juliana evinced an increased amount of anxiety; but Charles and George were in the highest possible spirits, their minds being filled with the most pleasing anticipations, although of a character diametrically opposite.

"Charles," said Sir John, as he drew him aside while the trunks were being attached to the carriage, "I wish, during George's stay in Town, you would keep your eye upon him."

"Certainly," replied Charles,—*"certainly."*

"Because," added Sir John, still resolved on adhering firmly to his determination not to set brother against brother, "he is not so accustomed to London life as you are, and may be picked up, or led away."

"I understand what you mean," replied Charles, "*I'll keep my eye upon him; he'll be all right.*"

"Will you write to me to-morrow?"

"I will."

All being now ready to enter the carriage, Sir John, with emotions of the most conflicting character, bade them adieu and they were off.

CHAPTER VII.

GEORGE'S WEEK IN TOWN.

AUGUSTUS, familiarly called GUSTY D'ALMAINE, belonged to that fast and glittering *caste* by whom excitement is held to be the soul of society. He had been essentially a "man of pleasure;" and before he became a "man of business" derived all his pleasure from an association with mere animals. Although intellectual himself, he seemed to despise the development of intellect in others, and repudiated the society of gentlemen for that of blacklegs and pugilists, with whom he would drink, smoke, and bet, and against whom he was always prepared to back himself to kill anything in nature, from a pheasant to a sparrow—from a stag to a rat. The sporting-houses were his saloons: he was intimate with every man of mark in the Ring, and was never so happy as when associating with and studying the low cunning of those whom he knew to be ruffians.

Vanity was doubtless the original germ of this passion for low society. Being the acknowledged patron of ruffians, he became their idol: his princely generosity, his judgment, and his spirit were their themes of admiration. They applauded him to the echo; and while they applauded they nursed him so well, that he squandered the whole of his patrimony amongst them.

It was then that he began to look round: it was then that he opened his eyes—not despairingly! but with a view to the recovery of at least some portion of that which he had lost, by the adoption of the very means by which his ruin had been effected. Having bought experience he determined on selling it!—and that at the highest possible price. He transformed pleasure at once into a profession, and became a man of business with nothing but experience for his stock in trade, and being versed in all the villainies—deep in all the mysteries, by virtue of which “the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,”—he entered like a philosopher, into a compact with one who had assisted in effecting his ruin, and as he was known to all the “Corinthians” of whom he was still recognised as one, and being, moreover, a special favourite of the young officers of the Guards—proverbially the greatest simpletons in sporting matters breathing—the result was highly profitable to both, without its being suspected for one moment that any connection existed between them.

George, of course, had no idea of D’Almaine’s real position. He imagined that he had still an almost inexhaustible fund at his command, and therefore on his arrival in town—having delicately refused to accept the offer of Dr. Greene—he repaired to an hotel in the vicinity of Lejeune’s residence, changed his dress, and started in search of D’Almaine.

And it may here be remarked that it was a change of dress—a “change” in every sense of the word—for instead of a rather puritanical suit of black, and a white cravat, he appeared in a pair of buckskin pantaloons; highly polished hunting boots, adorned with silver spurs; a sporting coat, with gilt buttons; a rich satin stock, and a waistcoat of green velvet, inlaid with gold! It was an elegant dress, and he being a really handsome fellow, looked the beau-ideal of a fine young English Gentleman.

On reaching D’Almaine’s lodgings in Regent Street, he was received with every manifestation of delight.

“You’re a brick!” cried D’Almaine; “I knew you’d come up: I felt sure of it, although you didn’t write. How did you come?”

“We posted up,” replied George.

“We posted up!—who are we?”

“My brother, and two or three women.”

“Your brother’s not one of our sort I suppose yet?”

“No: he’s just the same.”

“Well, now, have you dined?”

“No,” replied George.

“Then we’ll go and have a spicy dinner somewhere. But, old fellow,

before we go, we'll open a bottle of champagne. I say," he added, as he went to the sideboard, "how's the governor?"

"Oh, hearty."

"Not dead yet?"

"No, nor likely to die."

"As true as I'm alive, these jolly old swells live on and on as if they were really immortal. Now, then, old fellow, try that. I think you'll find it *pretty* near the mark!"

"That'll do," said George, having emptied his glass; "that's *about* it! Let's have another before you put the cork in. By Jove! this is slap!"

"Well, now," said D'Almaine, "how long are you going to stop?"

"A week," replied George.

"That'll do. And if we don't have a jolly week of it, old fellow, it shall not be my fault."

Having finished the bottle, they went to a tavern and had the best dinner that could be produced, and when they had sat between two and three hours, recounting the scenes in which they had been engaged, and indulging in high anticipations for the future, they went to see the men—the Billingsgate Beauty, and the Wapping Snob—who were to fight for a hundred a-side on the morrow.

The landlord of the house they entered was one of "the Snob's" principal backers; and on going into the large room above, which was crowded, they saw the Snob—an ill-looking, flat-nosed, bull-necked brute, with little twinkling eyes, nearly buried between his cheek-bones and his brows—sitting at the head of the table in all his glory. Every eye was upon him, and every heart seemed to pant for his success, while all he had to do was to look as ferocious, and to speak with as much confidence as possible.

Having had a few glasses of wine here, they proceeded to the house of "Artful Ben," at which the "Beauty" was to show that night, and there he was apparently of the self same breed, but looking much more like a winner than the "Snob."

"Artful Ben," was the *sobriquet* of him with whom D'Almaine had entered into the compact referred to. He had fought several battles, and had acquired the cognomen "Artful," by the peculiar slyness of his attacks, and his ability to slip like an eel from the grasp of his opponent. He was not, however, artful only in the ring: he was artful in everything. The schemes devised by D'Almaine—who never, of course, did the dirty work himself—were carried out by him with the most consummate art, and whenever D'Almaine introduced a new man, all he wanted to know was what was to be done with him, and he would most artfully do it.

When, therefore, George was introduced, he felt sure that D'Almaine had designed some grand robbery, and being anxious to ascertain, as usual, what was to be done, he artfully beckoned him out of the room.

"You've got a heavy swell there," said he; "who is he?"

"A blazer," replied D'Almaine.

"Green?"

"Quite green enough for us."

"*Much* tin?"

"He will have lots; he's the son of Sir John Croly, a man worth a hundred thousand, at least."

"Well, what's to be done? Can you do nothing with him?"

"Anything I like! I am laying out a long ball for him. When he comes into this property you'll see what I'll do with him. If we act like fools and do too much to him now, we shall spoil him, and it won't do at all to spoil a man like that."

"Very good; but can't we do a leetle to him?—Only just a leetle?"

"Yes; you can get Jack to take such a thing of him as sixty pounds to forty on the Beauty."

"Have you made him *sweet* upon the Beauty?"

"I've taken care of that; but let it be done cautiously."

"Now, never you trouble your head about that; that's my business. All you have to do, is to say what you want to have done. Wouldn't he go a leetle further than that, think you—only just a leetle?"

"Let us be content with that, to begin with. I don't know at all, yet, what money he has about him. If he hasn't enough with him to stake, take his I. O. U., or anything; that'll be all right."

"Very well; but I think we might go just a leetle further."

"Don't try for another pound."

"Very well," replied Ben; "what you say shall be law."

D'Almaine then returned to the room, and found George conversing with the Beauty, who was boasting about what he could do and would.

"Then, you've no doubt at all of being able to beat him?" said George, as D'Almaine took a seat by his side.

"Able to beat him!" replied the beauty with a ferocious expression of contempt. "I'll lick him and laugh at him! I'd bet fifty pounds of my own money if I had it, that I lick him in less than twenty minutes."

"Well, I believe you can," said D'Almaine.

"He can't stand against my right no how. There ain't half a chance for him no where. I should like to have the job every mornin' afore breakfast for a month."

"Well," said George, privately addressing D'Almaine, "he *appears* to be confident enough."

"Instead of six to four," replied D'Almaine, "it's somewhere about six to one. He *can't* lose."

"I should like to go in."

"You can't go far wrong. But wait: you may have an opportunity presently of doing it to greater advantage."

Having remained here till the Beauty had left with his trainer, D'Almaine took George into a more private room, in which about a dozen aristocratic fellows were betting and drinking champagne, when George was instantly recognised by two young noblemen who had known him at Cambridge, and with whom he felt of course quite at home.

The champagne went round, and the betting continued on every conceivable event: the time the fight would last, the number of rounds,

the first knock-down blow, the first blood, and so on, when one of the party cried, "I'll take six to four once more on the Beauty. I think he'll win too. Who'll bet six to four."

"I'll bet five to four," said George.

"That'll not do: I must have six to four."

"Well, I'll bet six to four."

"To what amount?"

"Sixty pounds to forty."

"I'll take it."

George produced his pocket-book, from which he drew six ten pound notes, leaving two, eighty pounds being all that he had been able to come up with; and having covered the forty, placed the whole in the landlord's hands.

"You look like a hearty old brick," said he, addressing the landlord. "I'll tell you what I'll do with *you*. We must have a supper of some sort. I'll give you three throws for a rump and dozen."

"With all my heart," cried the landlord; "throw away."

"We'll toss for the first throw," said George.

"Very well: I'll go first, if you like."

"Then go first."

The Artful threw, and got in all twenty-five.

"A leetle too few," said he, "but twenty-five's not always beaten."

George then took the box and threw eleven to begin with. He then threw nine, when the Artful cried "I'll go your halves!"

"Not a bit of it" said George. "I've staked my steaks upon a cast, and will stand the hazard of the die. The die is cast," he added, throwing seven more, "the steaks are mine. Sound the alarm."

"Do what?" said the landlord.

"Strike the cymbal!"

"Touch the bell," said D'Almaine.

"Of course!"—cried George.

"Sound the loud timbrel, and let's have a spree;
The landlord is in it, and we are scot free."

"Waiter," he added, assuming an air of the most refined politeness; "do us the favour to order steaks for all, and when you produce them on this festive board, let them possess that virtue of which either on the gridiron or in the pan, procrastination is the thief."

The waiter stared and really felt that some slight explanation would be agreeable.

"Don't let them be too much done," cried D'Almaine, and the waiter, who understood that, disappeared.

Loo was now proposed, and two parties were formed, and George was particularly fortunate. He swept two forty pound pools just before supper was announced, and then got two shares of the third.

D'Almaine was delighted. "That's ours," thought he, as he winked at the Artful, and the Artful thought so too: he also thought it was a pity to give up, but as supper was again announced, and as it was a single at both tables, the cards were relinquished for the steaks, of which they all partook with *gusto*.

Part 2.]

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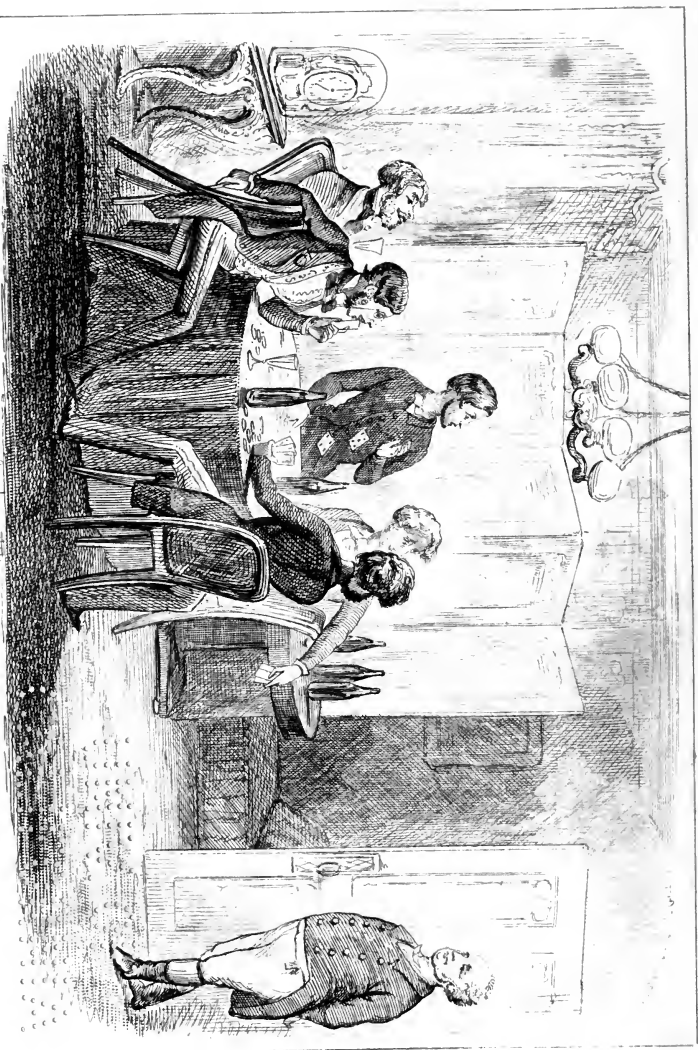
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Eleven o'clock was the time appointed for the men to be in the ring, and as they had nearly forty miles to travel, they decided on starting at six. It was then half-past two, and as they neither felt inclined to sleep, nor thought it worth while to go to bed, they resumed their game, and continued to play until the carriages which were to convey them arrived, when they had a cup of coffee each, and started for the fight.

Now, to enter into all the revolting details of a regular pugilistic encounter would be so contrary to the design of this history, that the idea of doing so must not be entertained. It will be quite sufficient to state that ruffianism and brutality formed the chief characteristics of the scene; that the men met in the ring, surrounded by thousands of spectators; that they fought with desperation for nearly an hour; and that, after having *allowed* himself to be battered about the head until he was almost blind, the Beauty—although evidently the stronger, and by far the more scientific man of the two—became apparently deaf to time, and lost the battle.

By this "loss" D'Almaine *himself* gained five hundred pounds! He had caused the Beauty to be bribed to lose the fight, and while he, to a trifling amount, backed him, his partner, through his agents, took every bet that was offered in his favour.

"Ah," said he to George, when the fight was at an end, "it's a pity he didn't escape the last blow."

"Well, he did his best to win," said George; "although he appears to be the stronger man now."

"The last blow settled him; knocked him out of time. Well! it's of no use fretting about it; the money's gone, and there's an end of it."

"Oh!" cried the Artful, coming up at the moment, "a leetle longer—only a leetle—and the saddle would have been on the other horse. That hit—that last hit—conflabbergasted his intellects. And that's the worst of it: a fighting man ought never to have any intellects at all; they're no use to him; he doesn't want 'em; they're on'y in the way! He ought to be a mere machine, to go right ding-dong at it until he's worn up."

The party then re-entered their carriages and returned to the first posting town, where they dined; it was, however, manifest that few of them were satisfied that the Beauty had been absolutely "deaf to time;" indeed, the majority expressed their conviction that that "deafness" was simulated, and one of them declared that he would never again bet upon "anything that could talk." George was about the only man amongst them who expressed his belief that the Beauty had done his best: "I am satisfied," said he, "although a loser; if he were not, at the time, insensible, I never saw a fellow insensible yet."

"That's just what I look at," observed the Artful; "if he'd had no senses this wouldn't have occurred. Before we can get a perfect fighting man, we must get a man without any senses at all!"

Having had a few bottles of wine after dinner, the party returned to the house of Artful Ben, where the champagne corks began to fly about again, and all were apparently restored to good humour.

"Now, then," said the Artful, having followed D'Almaine, who left the room while George was conversing with one of the party, "we've made a tidy thing of this; but what's to be done to-morrow?"

"Can you make the Pet safe?"

"Question is, what do you want done? Don't trouble your head about *whether* I can do it, or *how* I can do it; all you've got to say is what you want done."

"Well, then, I want the Pet to be made safe."

"Safe to win, you mean?"

"Of course."

"I know where the Badger is, now."

"Very well; let me know when you've made it all right, and then I'll see what's to be done with Croly, to begin with."

"He won a good hundred last night, and more than that, which, of course, we must have, with a leetle more to it."

"Of course I shall do the best I can. If you make it all right, come into the room with a cigar in your mouth; if you can't make it right, come in with a pipe: you understand?"

"Do I *know* a cigar from a pipe, do you think? Do you go in; I'll settle it all in an hour."

D'Almaine then returned to the room and got the dice—the sound of which, he knew, in *their* ears, was most exciting music—and threw against George for some more champagne—an example which was followed by them all. George then proposed a sweepstakes of a sovereign each, which was eagerly agreed to, and the whole of them drew round the table to play.

In less than an hour the Artful appeared, and as he was violently puffing a cigar, D'Almaine, of course, knew that he had "made it all right."

"Do you want to see the Pet?" said he, as he entered the room; "he is in the house."

"How is he?" inquired D'Almaine.

"He looks pretty well; he tells me he never felt better in his life."

"Well, let's have a look at him; let him come in."

The Artful left the room, and, in a few minutes, returned with the "Pet" and his trainer.

"It's almost time for you to be in bed, young gentleman; is it not?" said D'Almaine.

"I'm going, sir, directly," replied the Pet.

"Well, then, go, my boy—go; good night."

The Pet bowed, and left the room.

"I don't like the look of him much," said D'Almaine; "his eyes are not brilliant enough for me."

"He'll go fifteen miles," said the Artful, "very well, and perhaps a leetle further—just a leetle—and it'll be all over, but the shouting."

"I don't think so," said he who had won George's money on the fight, "I like him still, and I'll go another fifty or a hundred upon him. I'll give you a chance," he added, turning to George; "bad as he looks; I'll give you a chance of winning your money back."

"Will you go my halves?" inquired George of D'Almaine.

"With all my heart, old fellow!—go on."

"Well, then, I'll bet you fifty against him."

"Done; make it a hundred, if you like."

George—having consulted D'Almaine—replied, "A hundred be it!" and the money was staked.

It was, now past eleven; and, as George had engaged D'Almaine to sup with him at the hotel, they directed a coach to be called and started.

George, on reaching the hotel, ascertained that Charles had called several times during the day, and being apprehensive of his calling again; he ordered supper and retired to change his dress. It is true, he didn't dress quite so stiffly as he had been in the habit of dressing at home, but his appearance then was sufficiently puritanical to cause D'Almaine to smile on his return.

"Is that your masquerade dress, old fellow?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied George; "will it do?"

"Slap! Why, you look like a jolly old parson, in reality! I understand it; I've been obliged to come the self-same dodge myself; and an out-and-out dodge it is too! There's nothing on earth like it—nothing takes so well—nothing goes down half so smoothly. It's an old dodge, it's true; but it'll never wear out. It's now more extensively patronised than ever. It's the very thing for the country: such a steady young man!—such a pious young man!—so much above the poms and the vanities! You go to church, I suppose?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"And take the sacrament regularly?"

"Of course."

"Well, I never came it quite so strong as that; I never could, and because I never would, a skinny old aunt of mine left all she had away from me. Conscience, on that occasion, cost me over forty thousand pounds."

"Do you think it worth the money?"

"Worth the money! It's worth nothing to any man alive! As the Artful said of the Beauty's intellect—'It's of no use to him!—he doesn't want it!—it's only in the way!' I wish that I had known then what I know now: conscience might, in that case, have gone—*anywhere*! Even now—although I don't exactly want it—I'd be like you for a time, a regular religious griffin, for half the money."

"Which proves," said George, "how necessary it is for me to be one, seeing that I have at stake five times that amount."

"Isn't the property entailed?"

"I wish it was; if it were, you wouldn't catch me sporting *these* togs! No, Gusty, I have a game yet to *win*, and although I've the cards in my hand, I must mind how I play them."

"Well, but there's no doubt at all, I suppose, about your coming in for half of it?"

"Half of it! Why should I be satisfied with half of it, being the elder son? The division is what I fear; I'm afraid of its being

divided. You see, Gusty, when we were at Cambridge, I went, perhaps, rather too fast, and the governor *did* threaten to disinherit me. Now—although I know well that he has not done so—although I've ascertained, beyond all doubt, that the will which secures to me all—with the exception of a few legacies—has not been altered—he has still the power to make that infernal division; which is, indeed, the only thing I dread."

"I see; oh, I see! Then, do the doleful, and stick to the submissive. Does your brother come it strong?"

"No; I can't complain of *him*! He's a very good fellow at heart, but fond of study; which you and I, you know, Gusty, never could tackle."

"No," said D'Almaine, as the waiter entered with the supper; "we always preferred tackling something of this sort, old fellow!"

"Champagne," said George, addressing the principal waiter; "now, then, old boy," he added; "come, draw up."

They then commenced, and ate an unusually hearty supper, and, when the table had been cleared, George proposed "a game of some sort."

"What can we play at?" inquired D'Almaine.

"I wonder whether they have any dice in the house?"

"Safe," said D'Almaine; "they are sure to have them here."

The bell was rung, and the dice were ordered.

"Now," said George, "how shall we play?"

"Let's play as we have been playing, if you like: three throws for a pound. Or, I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll bet a sovereign a throw, for twenty throws, that you don't get over seven."

"Done!" cried George, and D'Almaine very dexterously changed the dice for a pair which he had in his waistcoat pocket, and which—being loaded, for hazard—would show—except, indeed, by accident—seven, and no more.

Just, however, as they were about to commence, Charles was announced, when the dice, box, and all, in an instant disappeared.

"Where, on earth, have you been all day?" inquired Charles, having been introduced to D'Almaine.

"The fact is," said George, "I met with my friend, who took me to his uncle's, at Richmond, and there we have been ever since."

"Dr. Greene wanted us to dine with him to day; we *must* go to-morrow."

"Very well. How is Mr. Lejeune?"

"Better; much better."

"Thank God for that! You will have a glass of wine with us?"

"Yes; but I must not stop long. I thought I'd just call again before I went to bed to ascertain whether you were really lost."

"I should like you to see D'Almaine's uncle," said George; "he is one of the most benevolent old gentlemen I ever met. We must go over together before I leave town."

"He would," said D'Almaine, "be delighted to see you."

"I shall be proud of the introduction," said Charles, who filled his

glass, and then began to converse on various topics with D'Almaine, whose appearance and manners were certainly prepossessing in the extreme.

"Well," said Charles at length, "I must say good night."

"So must I," said D'Almaine. "It's getting late."

"Late only for me," observed George. "I am not—like you London people—used to late hours. Good night: good night: God bless you both! I'll be with you, Charles, in the morning, please God!"

Being thus left alone, he sat down and finished the bottle, and ordered another, which he also drank, and then retired gloomily to bed. Aye! gloomily: for however much he might drink—and having long accustomed himself to it, he was able to drink a considerable quantity without displaying the slightest symptoms of intoxication—he invariably, when he drank alone, sunk into a gloomy reverie.

Having had no rest the preceding night he soon fell asleep, and slept soundly till the morning, when, having dressed in his usual style, he went to have breakfast with Charles at Lejeune's.

"Dear me," said the Widow, as she entered the breakfast-room with Juliana, "we feared that we had lost you."

"I went to dine with a benevolent old friend of mine at Richmond," said George, "and it was late when I returned. How is Mr. Lejeune?" he added, addressing Juliana.

"Much more tranquil this morning," she replied. "His prayers for renewed strength appear to have been heard."

"Thank God!" exclaimed George—"thank God! During illness there is nothing which shines with so much lustre as Faith. Beautiful as it ever unquestionably is, sickness renders it still more sublime while its glory radiates the solemn bed of death!"

"Well, but we have happily no death-bed at present to contemplate," said Charles, perceiving the tears spring into the eyes of Juliana. "Mr. Lejeune is recovering fast."

"I am indeed happy to hear it," said George. "Still God only knows how soon we may be called to appear before the awful Throne of Mercy and of Grace."

"Well," returned Charles, "we'll not pursue that subject now. What do you think of doing with yourself this morning?"

"I thought of attending the annual meeting of the Society for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts. Will you accompany me?"

"No," replied Charles; "I shall be otherwise engaged. What do you think of doing?" he enquired of Juliana.

"Papa wishes me to go up after breakfast and sit with him. He has, I believe, something of importance to communicate."

"Well then," said Charles, who knew perfectly well what that something was, "you and I, Mrs. Wardle, will have a quiet walk round the park, and I am not quite sure that I shall not prevail upon you to take me to three exhibitions."

"I shall be indeed most happy to accompany you," said the Widow; "but I fear that I shall be too troublesome."

"Well," returned Charles, "you are, I know, very troublesome gene-

rally; and yet it gives me pleasure to be troubled with you! Can you account for that?" he enquired of Juliana.

"Yes," she replied, "I can account for it well."

After breakfast—during which but little was said by either George or Juliana, Charles returned to Lejeune, and remained with him until the Widow was ready, when he gave up his post to Juliana, and left with the Widow and George.

"My, dear," said Lejeune, taking Juliana's hand, and gazing earnestly at her, "is Charles Croly paying his addresses to any one?"

Juliana looked confused, and at length replied "No, papa," as if afraid to utter the words.

"How do you know that he is not, my dear?"

"Oh," she replied tremulously, "I feel sure that he is not."

"But what has induced that feeling, my love?"

Juliana was silent, while her embarrassment was intense.

"Have you any reason for supposing that he is not?"

"Papa," said Juliana eagerly, "have *you* any reason to believe that he is?"

"Nay, my love, do not interrogate me! I merely asked if you had any reason for supposing that he is not?"

Again Juliana was silent, and became pale as marble, and looked round fitfully, and scarcely breathed.

"Did you ever imagine," pursued Lejeune, cautiously—"did you ever believe that he *loved* any one?"

"Yes, papa—yes!" she replied, blushing deeply, "I have believed, and do believe still, that he loves *me*!"

"Well, my child, well,—be composed!" said Lejeune. "You are worthy of his love! But how has he caused you to inspire this belief?"

"I cannot tell. He is so kind, so generous, so noble, so good!—he has made me feel that he loves me."

"He may be kind, generous, noble, and good, and yet not love *you*, my dear!"

"Oh, but I am sure that he loves me."

"Has he ever told you so?"

"No papa: his looks have convinced me: his looks alone."

"Well, my dear, assuming that he does—we'll put it so—*assuming* that he loves you—what then?"

Juliana looked bewildered and made no reply.

"Suppose," pursued Lejeune, "that some one loves *him*?"

"None can ever love him so dearly as I!"

"You love him?"

"Forgive me, papa, but I feel that I do most fondly. I tell you—" she added, overwhelmed with confusion—"I tell you—because—I—I thought—pray do not be angry with me!"

"Angry, my dear child!—Angry?—kiss me: I cannot be angry with you."

She kissed his hand and pressed it to her heart: then kissed his lips with passionate fervour while her tears mingled with his.

"My child," said he in faltering accents, "my dear, my own, my

only child—how fondly I love you none can know save those who have on earth but one to love. You my child are all the world to me!—in your happiness are centred all my earthly hopes. You are my life, my pride, my joy! To see you happy were to see myself blessed by Him whom we all have reason to adore!”

“Dear papa!” said Juliana, as the tears chased each other down her cheeks—“Do not weep!—pray, pray do not weep!—I am—I am happy: indeed I am happy. Do not notice *my* tears!—they are tears of happiness: indeed, dear papa, they are tears of joy!”

“My child,” said Lejeune, having somewhat subdued his emotion, “we were speaking of your love for Charles. You were saying that you felt that you loved him. I am neither amazed at this nor alarmed. He is all that you have described him to be—kind, generous, noble, and good,—and I have—I have—reason to believe that he really loves you—”

“Have you?” said Juliana, with an expression of ecstasy—“Have you?”

“I have.”

“Then, dear papa, I am happy indeed!”

“If,” pursued Lejeune, “I am correct in my conjecture, his love will soon develop itself in a form which will leave no doubt of its existence. Now, my child, I am not opposed to its development! There is no man whom I more highly esteem—there is no man whom I believe to be more worthy of your love—than Charles. If, therefore—and I cannot now doubt it—you have sufficiently consulted your heart to feel convinced that you have for him that rooted affection without which happiness cannot endure, believe me, my child, that if he should prove that he has the same affection for you, no opposition will be offered by me.”

“Bless you! dear papa, bless you! Oh! how full of gladness my heart feels now!—how full of joy! Bless you!” she continued, while embracing him with rapture—“Now am I not happy?—Hark!” she exclaimed on hearing a gentle knock at the chamber door, “Who is that?”

“Mr. Raymond, my dear, doubtless.”

Juliana flew to the door, and as Mr. Raymond entered he looked at her enquiringly, and then at Lejeune, and at length said, “Now what is the use of my endeavouring to keep you tranquil if you suffer yourself to be thus excited? What’s the matter? What is it all about? *This* will never do!—this will never do at all! You must go into the country again, young lady,” he added, affectionately pressing her hand; “I don’t *want* you!—I can do better *without* you! There, run away, and let me counteract all this mischief.”

Juliana, with an eloquent smile, again kissed Lejeune and disappeared, and when the cause of this excitement had been briefly explained, Lejeune became perfectly calm.

Now, while this scene was being enacted, George was preparing to accompany D’Almaine to witness the race between the “Pet” and the “Badger.” He was dressed as before in his sporting coat, satin scarf,

buckskins, boots, and spurs, and, having mounted the finest and most valuable horse he could hire, looked conspicuously aristocratic.

The place appointed for this race to come off was an enclosed ground, on the Lea Bridge Road, about five miles from Shoreditch Church. Here, when George and D'Almaine arrived, thousands had assembled, and the whole scene was one of intense excitement. Some were betting their fifties, some their tens, while others were staking their sovereigns and shillings: indeed every man on the ground appeared to be in a pecuniary sense interested in the result.

Two o'clock had been named for the men to start, and when each of them had taken a turn round the ground, they came to the scratch with every eye fixed upon them. They then tossed for choice of sides, and when the word "Off!" was given, away they bounded, the Badger taking the lead.

During the first round, the Pet did not appear to be anxious to go in front, but in the second, he made a spurt and passed the Badger—a feat which was rewarded by his friends with deafening cheers. The Badger smiled, and allowed his opponent to go some considerable distance a-head, and then dashed past him, and then again dropped in the rear, and thus continued to play with him until they had completed the thirteenth mile, when he once more shot like an arrow in front and obtained a lead of two hundred yards, with an apparent determination to keep it. At this point, the betting was five, six, and seven to four in his favour, it being manifest that he was the swifter and by far the stronger man. George himself bet seventy pounds to forty upon him. The Pet struggled hard to diminish the distance between them, but in vain: the Badger still kept the lead, and continued to keep it until he had completed the eighteenth mile, when—as the party of whom D'Almaine was the chief had made all the bets they were likely to make—he received his instructions, and suddenly put his hand to his side and staggered! This reanimated the Pet, who increased his speed, and once more passed his opponent. The Badger—who appeared to be in agony—did not, however, give in. He made another spurt, and nearly caught the Pet, but again he put his hands to his side and appeared to be unable to proceed. He was, however, off again in a moment, but the next he was apparently seized more violently than ever, when he stopped and fell—leaving the Pet to complete the distance at his leisure.

George, immediately the fellow had fallen, rode up, with the view of ascertaining the cause, but all that he could get from him was that he had accidentally swallowed some cold water from the sponge, which produced a knot in his side and "doubled him up."

"God bless my life!" cried D'Almaine—"how unfortunate—who could have thought it? He had such a lead."

"I certainly thought him secure," said George.

"Secure! It was a hundred to one in his favour! What do you think of this, Ben?" he inquired of the Artful, who was seriously occupied in pulling his lower lip, and looking exactly like a man who had lost a large sum of money—"Eh! What do you think of this?"

"Think!" echoed the Artful. "Think! I'm con-flabber-gasted. That leetle water—only that *leetle*, you see, did it all!—There's a job, sir;—there's a job," he added, turning to George; "did you ever, in your life, sir, see anything look safer?"

"I never did," replied George, "I certainly never did."

"And all owing to that leetle water—that leetle!—conflabbergasting his inside. And that's the worst of a running-man having an inside. If he had no inside there'd be nothing the matter with it; but, as it is, there's safe to be something: either his heart beats too much, or his liver's affected, or his lungs are out of order, or something. We shall never get a perfect running man until we get a man without any inside! He should be a mere machine and go by clock-work!"

"Well, then, you'd have the works inside," said George.

"Aye; but I'd have 'em so constructed as to be able to wind him up to go any given distance. If I wanted him to run twenty miles, I'd wind him up to go twenty miles; if I only wanted him to run a hundred yards, I'd wind him up, of course, accordin'."

"Well," said George, smiling, "such a machine would be useful—especially if it could be warranted—but I'm afraid you'd not be able to make it available while you have flesh and blood to deal with."

"Flesh and blood's no use, sir! Depend upon it, sir, flesh and blood's no use. You can't depend on flesh and blood—it's the nature of flesh and blood to deceive. See what flesh and blood's done in this case! Could anything look better?—Could anything go better?—And yet, when it seemed to be going with ease, could anything ever stop worse? Flesh and blood's not worth twopence! I'll defy you to bet upon flesh and blood safe."

George again smiled; but that smile was merely mechanical. He had lost all his money: they had drawn from him every pound that he had; and now the question was, "What's to be done?"

"Come, old fellow," cried D'Almaine, while George was endeavouring to answer this question; "hang it! Don't be down!"

"I have lost all I had," returned George.

"What of that? You can easily get more."

"But how?"

"Oh, Ben will let you have what you want. I always run to him when I'm short. That'll be all right. Don't be without money. A man feels so stupidly dull without money! Go and tell him you want some."

"I don't know him sufficiently well."

"Nonsense; that'll be all right. I'll do it for you.—Ben," he added, beckoning the Artful to his side, "Mr. Croly wants a hundred—let him have it, will you?"

"Certainly I will—does he want it now?"

"Yes; he'll give you an I. O. U. for it, and that's just as good as a bank note."

George wrote the I. O. U. and received the money, and felt very considerably better, and when he had offered to stand some champagne they went together into the house adjoining.

Now, while they were there, an elderly gentleman entered a travelling carriage hastily, and directed his servant to get in with him. He had been on the ground during the whole of the race, and had kept his eye fixed upon George. He had seen him stake the seventy pounds to forty: he had also seen him give the I. O. U. and receive the hundred; but, being muffled up, he was unnoticed and unknown, and had directed his servant to enter the carriage lest George should recognise *him*.

That gentleman was no other than Sir John, who, feeling lonely at the Hall in the absence of the Widow, and being anxious to ascertain how they were getting on in town, had started that morning, attended by Corney, and stopped on seeing the assembled multitude, of whom George was by far the most conspicuous.

Had he made himself known, George of course would neither have lost the seventy pounds nor borrowed the hundred; but being resolved on remaining unknown, he left the scene in the manner described, and proceeded at once towards town.

To Corney, the fact of his having been desired to enter the carriage with his master, was a source of considerable speculation. "What's in the wind now?" he enquired of himself. "What's up? or what's going to be up? Is he going to make a gentleman of me? or is he going to say suffen vicious? He looks vicious enough—but what does he want me in here for? It is certainly more comfortable inside than out; but can any mortal swindle me into the belief that he has me here merely to study my comfort? Shall I tell him that I much prefer my outside place? Shall I say as the women who can't pay the outside fare say it always makes me feel ill to ride inside? Always won't do, because I never rode inside before: but what's the meaning of it all?—that's what I want to know! If he has anything to say to me, why don't he say it, instead of sitting there, and biting his lips, and knitting his brows, and looking fierce, and swearing to himself—for I know he's swearing!—no flesh can keep on looking so without swearing—why don't he speak, if he has anything to say? It's worse than being fixed in the pillory to sit here, and ever so much less exciting! Outside one *can* sit and sing, and be jolly; but here it's about five-and-twenty times worse than solitary confinement. I wonder how such a thing as a song would tell now?—a good song, sung in a tidy style? I should like to try it, only I dussent! I wonder what sort of an effect it would have? Shall I strike up? No, Corney, bor, it won't do. I wish he'd go to sleep. I *should* feel a little matters comfortable then! It's worse than work, sitting so! I wish, though, I'd put my other trowsers on. The knees shine so in here. But who could have thought—who could have dreamt—who could have taken it into his skull—that I should have had this honour? Blister the honour! I've a good mind to say it don't suit me! I will!—dashed if I don't! If he'd anyth'ng to say he'd have said it afore this. Dashed if I don't let him know I don't like it. Sir John," said he, "will you allow me to go outside again? Not being used to riding inside, I feel it queer."

"Order them to stop," said Sir John. And Corney gave the order, and wasn't long about it; and when they had stopped he alighted

without remorse, and having mounted his Dickey, again felt at home.

"If I had such a thing as a million a-year," said he, "I mightn't perhaps mind riding inside with him; but as I've nothing at all like that money coming in, I feel about five-and-twenty times more happy here."

On his arrival in town, Sir John went direct to Lejeune's, where the Widow and Juliana received him with delight. His presence indeed filled them with rapture! They knew not how to express the pleasure they felt: while Juliana affectionately hung on his arm, the Widow kept his hand in hers, and shed tears of gladness.

"Where's Charles?" he enquired, having expressed himself happy to see them so well. "Where's Charles?"

"He is gone to the city for Mr. Lejeune," replied the Widow, "and we shall not have the pleasure of seeing him again until the evening; for, from there he is going to meet George at Dr. Greene's."

"Is George staying with Dr. Greene?"

"No; being unwilling to intrude upon his kindness, he went to the hotel at the corner of the square."

"Do you know where he is now?"

"We have not seen him since the early part of the morning. He left us to attend a meeting."

"Did he say what meeting?"

"Yes; the annual meeting of the Society for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts."

"Oh!" said Sir John, with an ill-concealed feeling of indignation.

"Well," he added, assuming an expression of gaiety, "are you going to ask me to dine with you to-day?"

"Oh!" said Juliana, "we shall be indeed happy if you will."

"Well, then, I will; and in the evening I'll put up at this hotel."

"But why, Sir John?" cried Juliana; "why not remain here?"

"My dear, I have a desire to put up at this hotel. But we shall not see less of each other on that account. And now," he added, "tell your papa that I am here, and while you are preparing for dinner, I'll sit and chat with him."

Juliana left the room; and it may, as a remarkable fact, be recorded, that immediately after she *had* done so Sir John took the Widow's hand, and kissed it!

Bearing in mind his engagement to dine with Dr. Greene, George returned to town very soon after Sir John, and proceeded to dress in his usual style for dinner. On the road, however, he had engaged D'Almaine, his two noble friends, and Gore—that other friend of his who had done him the honour of winning all his money—to sup with him at his hotel, it having been suggested by D'Almaine that, as Gore was a careless player, they might win back the money they had lost on the race.

His first object, therefore, was to leave Dr. Greene's that evening as early as possible, and as Charles felt anxious to rejoin Juliana—it having been intimated to him by Lejeune that he was satisfied on that point

which dearly concerned him—they left together before ten o'clock, and separated for the night on reaching Lejeune's door, neither of course having the slightest idea of Sir John being then in the house.

The supper had been ordered for half-past ten, and at that time the party arrived, when all being anxious for the introduction of cards, the supper, although a delicious one, passed off as mechanically as if it had consisted of a mere crust of bread and cheese.

"Well, I suppose," said George, "you would like a game of some sort?"

"With all *my* heart," said Gore. "What do you propose?—Whist?"

"There are five of us," observed D'Almaine, "I should say Loo."

"I hate Loo," said Gore; "I always play like a fool."

"If we have Whist, one of us *must* stand out. Let us all play together."

"Well," returned Gore, whose apparent disinclination was of course a mere *ruse*, "as you please."

They then commenced with a sovereign force, and certainly Gore *appeared* to play in the most careless manner. He was even looted at starting, by leading the nine when he had the ace of trumps in his hand! As the game proceeded, however, he and D'Almaine—who told each other by signs what they held, as plainly as if they had spoken—looted George almost invariably whenever he played, and the pool was considered worth sweeping. They took the miss as often as the rest—nay, even more often—but, never unless she contained good cards; which, of course, they had taken care to mark. Twenty, thirty, forty, and even fifty, pound pools they cleared thus, while George very rarely got more than a single.

Of course, George's hundred pounds very soon went; he, therefore, privately borrowed another hundred of D'Almaine, which he also lost, and that rapidly—for, with the view of recovering himself, he then played with more desperation than ever. D'Almaine then lent him another hundred—forty-five pounds of which he had to put in the pool. He played, and was looted, and, of course, had to put down forty-six pounds more. He played again, with two trumps, and was looted again!—when Sir John was shown into the room!

The consternation expressed at this moment by George may be imagined. He became pale as death, and violently trembled: had a spectre appeared, he could not have displayed a more vehement aspect of terror.

"Good evening, gentlemen," observed Sir John, endeavouring to assume an air of gaiety; "enjoying yourselves, I perceive. Well!—don't allow me to interrupt you. I must introduce myself, I suppose; my son, it appears, will not introduce me."

"Sir John Croly, I presume," said D'Almaine.

"Yes," replied Sir John. "Now," he added, drawing a chair near the table, "let me beg of you to proceed."

"Well," said one of the young noblemen, "let me see: what's the board? Oh, forty-six; my deal; that'll be forty-seven."

"Put it down for me," whispered George to D'Almaine.

"No!" said Sir John, who overheard him; "I'll put it down for you—how much?"

"Forty-six pounds," replied Gore.

"Forty-six pounds! You are playing high, gentlemen, are you not? I have not so much money about me; but I'll give you a cheque for the amount."

"Oh," said D'Almaine, "that is perfectly unnecessary."

Sir John, notwithstanding, produced his book, and having drawn the cheque, placed it upon the table; when the cards were dealt, and George looked at his hand, but wouldn't play it; nor would he take-miss. The game was between D'Almaine and Gore, who played and divided the board.

"Well," said D'Almaine, "that settles it; I said I'd leave off the next single. I must go; it's getting late."

The party—perceiving, of course, how the case stood—then rose, and having politely bowed to Sir John, left the room.

"Villain!" cried Sir John, having closed the door, "Villain! Hypocritical villain!"

"How?—" said George, having somewhat recovered his self-possession—"How, a villain? Because I have been weak enough to play a game of cards? I know it's wrong! I admit all that; but——"

"Where have you been, sir?" demanded Sir John.

"I've been to dine with Dr. Greene."

"But where were you in the morning, when you went to attend a Meeting for the Propagation of the Gospel?—You awful hypocrite!—You vile associate of blacklegs and thieves! Whom do you rob to play for fifty pound boards?—Where do you get the money to bet your seventy pounds to forty?—And who's to pay the hundred you borrowed on the ground?"

"I must, of course—" said George, whom these questions astounded—"I must, of course, endure every species of indignity which malice may prompt you to——"

"Malice!" cried Sir John, vehemently; "what do you mean by malice?"

"Who has been trumping up these tales, to set you against me?—Charles?"

"No, hypocrite; no! He knows nothing of you."

"Some one must have invented them!"

"They are no inventions, scoundrel! But you and I will come to an understanding in the morning: I cannot trust myself to say what I have to say to-night."

"Will you hear me explain?"

"No, I'll not! I'll not hear you attempt to explain; feeling sure that whatever explanation you may offer will be a mere tissue of lies!"

"Then—" said George, assuming a mournful expression—"Then must I endure all in silence."

"Oh, monstrous—monstrous hypocrisy! But I know you too well to be deceived by tones which only inspire me with indignation. I leave

you—" he added, with increased vehemence—" I *leave* you, lest I should curse you!"

George, when Sir John had left the room, finished a bottle of champagne, that had just been opened, and ordered a bottle of brandy, with which he retired to his chamber.

"Well," thought he, as he sank in an easy chair, with the brandy and a bottle of water before him, "I have been caught: certainly I have been caught; and now, how can I make it all right in the morning?—How came he to know about that seventy to forty?—Who could have told him about the hundred I borrowed? I mentioned Charles; but Charles was not there. Can he have been pumping D'Almaine?—What opportunity has he had of doing so?—Has he been getting it out of Ben? He must have obtained his information from one of them!—as far as the hundred is concerned, they are the only two men who knew anything about it. He must have called at Ben's house before he came here: and, yet, how *could* he have ascertained that Ben knew me? I'll see Ben in the morning; yet, why not to-night? I shall have, in the morning, to make my defence, and must therefore know the grounds upon which I am charged. I'll go to-night—before I sleep I'll know all!"

He then rang the bell, and when the porter appeared he said, "Come here, my boy! Can I trust you?"

"Yes, sir," replied the porter; "certainly, sir."

"Well; my governor, Sir John, I understand is in the house."

"Yes, sir; he's just gone to bed."

"Very well. Now I want to go out for half-an-hour, but I don't want him to know that I am out."

"All right, sir! He needn't know anything about it."

"Very good. I merely wish to see one of those gentlemen who supped here to-night. I'll return within an hour."

Having drawn on his boots he left the hotel, and proceeded at once to the house of the Artful, where he found D'Almaine and the rest discanting freely on George's terror, and Sir John's assumed urbanity.

"D'Almaine," said he as he entered the room, "I want to have a word with you in private."

"You'll look in again before you go?" said Gore.

"Yes," replied George, "I'll be with you in a moment. D'Almaine," said he, having left the room with him, "have you had any talk with my governor?"

"No; only that which you heard."

"Had you seen him before he came into the room?"

"Certainly not. I wish I had, that I might have put you up to the fact of his being in town."

"Had Ben seen him, think you?"

"I should say not."

"Then who could have told him of my having borrowed that hundred on the ground?"

"Does he know of that?"

"He does; and if neither you nor Ben told him, how came he to know it?"

"I pledge you my honour," replied D'Almaine, "that he never heard a syllable on the subject, either directly or indirectly from me: nor do I think it likely that Ben has named it to any man alive. That, however, we'll soon ascertain. Ben!" he added, calling to the Artful, who immediately approached, "have you seen Sir John Croly?"

"Don't know him," replied Ben—"don't know him from Adam."

"Have you told *any* one about Mr. Croly having borrowed that hundred of you on the ground?"

"Do you think I'm a lunatic? That's all I've got to say. Do you think I'm such a stark naked fool as to do a thing like that? Is it likely?—is it even a leetle likely?—is it like anything likely?"

"I thought not," replied D'Almaine; "but it appears that *some* one has told Sir John!"

"Well, but who *could* have told him?"

"He knows of it," said George, "and a pretty scrape I've got into in consequence."

"Well," returned Ben, "that get's over me a leetle above a bit. But if I ever named it to any living flesh, may the next glass of wine I drink choke me! But do you think he really knows? Isn't it only a mere guess, think you?"

"How could he guess at a thing like that? How could he dream of such a thing, if it hadn't been intimated to him by some one? Well," he added. "I'm in a mess!—and I must get out of it! Now, look here: I borrowed that hundred for you, D'Almaine! Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"And I laid that seventy pounds to forty—of which he also knows—on your account!"

"I understand," said D'Almaine; "that will do. You'll get over it so. Do you understand, Ben?"

"Have I got a pair of ears?"

"Very well. Then let this be stuck to."

"You can't do a better dodge than that," said Ben. "But what wholly confabbergasts me all over is the thought of his coming to know it at all!"

"The fact amazes *me*," returned George; "I can form no conception of the source from which he derived his information. But come," he added, "come, let's go in for five minutes. I *can't* stop long."

They then returned to the room, where the fact of Sir John appearing amongst them, was reverted to of course."

"You had no idea of seeing him," said Gore, "had you?"

"No more," replied George, "than I had of seeing Satan!"

"Well, *you'll* get over that. Come, have a glass of wine. I've been served so myself. I dare say all here know pretty well what it is."

George took a chair and tried to enjoy himself, but couldn't; he therefore very soon left, and returned to the hotel, when he finished his brandy; and rolled into bed; and in the morning, having on his pillow weighed minutely the whole of the bearings of the case—he wrote to Sir John as follows:—

"DEAR FATHER,—

"I am wretched!—wretched in the conviction that your heart has been turned against me.

"The anger you manifested last night was just—just, because I had the weakness and the wickedness to become a gambler: I deeply feel its justice; but the epithets which that anger prompted you to employ have sunk into my soul.

"Were I an habitual worshipper of Satan, I might habitually commit this sin with the semblance of temporal impunity; but as I am not, I am no sooner caught at his shrine than, as if to be revenged, he betrays me.

"He it was who in this case betrayed me to you. You know that I have offended by allowing myself to be tempted to play—and sorely have I suffered for that offence throughout the night—but as you do *not* know that I am innocent of the other offences laid to my charge, I feel called upon at once to make that innocence appear.

"The bet to which you alluded of seventy pounds to forty, I laid on account of D'Almaine; while the hundred pounds which I borrowed was for *him*, and I pledge my sacred honour, for him alone.

"The only offence of which I am guilty is that of being tempted to play with those Devil's books, and for that I am unfeignedly sorry.

"This explanation—which I should have given last evening had you but deigned to hear it—will, I trust, tend—not to palliate my real offence, but to mitigate your anger—and I most humbly pray that God will again turn your heart towards

"Your ever affectionate son,

"GEORGE CROLY."

Having read this calmly again and again, Sir John felt that he had been too severe. The fact of George having played at cards was, in his judgment, venial. He was fond of a rubber at whist himself, and albeit he never played high, he was quite prepared to make every allowance for the temptation to which George had been exposed. The bet of seventy pounds to forty, and the I. O. U. for the hundred, were the things which—when viewed in connexion with the fact of George having left Charles and the Widow expressly in order to attend a Religious Meeting—had so violently excited his indignation.

"Still," thought he, with all his natural desire to judge with lenity, 'he might have been strongly tempted; it might have been his intention to go to this meeting; he might have met this D'Almaine on the road. He speaks of Satan having tempted to betray him, and it certainly appears strange that I should have caught him not only at cards but at the race, and more especially as I never before travelled that way, having invariably taken the road from the forest through Stratford to town! He also pledges his honour that the bet was made and that the money was borrowed for this D'Almaine. Now, am I to believe him? He has deceived me so often, that I find it hard to do so. But the truth of this statement is capable of proof—I can prove whether it is true or false: I can go to D'Almaine, before it is possible for them to have any conversation on the subject; and from him I can

ascertain the truth or falsehood of this solemn declaration. I will do so; and if I find that it is false, I'll cast him off for ever! But I hope it is not; I *hope* it is not; and therefore I almost fear to go. But I will!—yes, I will!"

In pursuance of this resolution, he rang the bell, and desired Corney to tell George that breakfast was ready. George was about to have breakfast alone, but on being thus summoned, he entered Sir John's room; looking, of course, as wretched as possible.

As he entered, Sir John, took no apparent notice, but, with an expression of sternness, commenced his repast. Not a word, in fact, was spoken by either until after breakfast, when Sir John said, "Where does this D'Almaine live?"

"In Regent-street," replied George, in mournful tones.

"I wish to see him," added Sir John; "you can take me to him."

Corney, who was in attendance, at once got Sir John's coat, and when he had adjusted it, with all his accustomed alacrity and grace, Sir John and George left the hotel.

"There's suffen up," said Corney, on his return to the room; "there's suffen up extra; I know there is, or they'd never eye each other so vicious. It's last night's job, I'll bet anything to nothing. I wonder how he looked when Sir John went in. I'll bet a million he didn't feel anyhow jolly! Why don't he do the thing that's right, then? Don't tell me! I say it's right on howdacious to play for a mint o' money like that!—Seventy pound and forty, I heard Sir John say, and then another hundred. Now, just look at that! Seventy and forty: that's a hundred and ten, and then a hundred pound more: that's two hundred and ten—why it's a fortune! How long should I be saving two hundred and ten pound, by putting by ten pound a year? Why, I should be twenty years about it! Just look at that—yet, with him, it all goes like the snuff of a candle! That ain't the way to do business—not a bit of it. And then, that champagne: *only* a guinea a bottle—that's all, for champagne! The waiter tells me they had a dozen of this swill last night, and half-a-dozen the night before: there's eighteen guineas, to begin with; and then there's a few extra guineas for the suppers! I wonder what my old father would say, if I were to bring him here, just for a spree, and order a couple of suppers and a mob of champagne, and then leave him to pay for the lot! Send I may live! wouldn't he open his eyes when they brought in the bill for his inward digestion! He'd be fit to knock his head off! 'Why,' he'd call out, 'I've swallowed two cows! I could have fattened a score of pigs, and a hundred turkeys for the money!' And when he came to reckon up how many hearts he could warm and how many hungry bellies he could fill for the same amount, he'd hold it to be one of the greatest sins he ever, in all his life, committed. And it is a sin, when you come to look at it! But then, what's sin to that beauty? What does he care about sin? I often hear him say he's a sinner, and I believe him! I wonder how he'll look in the other world, when all the poor people he's robbed of bottles of rum, wine, and brandy come against him—as they will then, for they'll all know it then—and tax him with the swindle? I

wonder what he'll say? But if they don't know him now Sir John does, and so do I!—I know a precious sight more than Sir John; but, as old father says, it's my bread to know nothing."

While Corney was delivering this soliloquy, Sir John and George were walking towards Regent-street, in silence. Not a single observation was made by either; not a word passed between them until they arrived at D'Almaine's lodging, when Sir John said, "I wish to speak with D'Almaine alone."

Having been announced, Sir John was shown up, while George—who, of course, guessed the object of his visit—remained in the parlour below.

"I am happy to see you, Sir John," said D'Almaine, who bowed with great politeness, and handed him a chair.

"My object," said Sir John, "in thus calling upon you, Mr. D'Almaine, is to ask you a few simple questions, which I hope you will, without a moment's hesitation, answer."

"Certainly, Sir John; if I can I will do so, with pleasure."

"You saw my son borrow a hundred pounds, yesterday; immediately after the race."

"I did; I got him to borrow it."

"Got him to borrow it! What am I to understand by that?"

"I wanted a hundred to settle some bets, and I asked him to borrow it for me."

"Well, but, my dear sir, why did you not borrow it yourself?"

"Because I'd just before had some money of the same person, and didn't like to ask a second time. But I have settled all since. I merely wanted it until I returned to town."

"Have you paid this hundred pounds, then?"

"Yes: I paid it last night."

"Have you got the L. O. U.?"

"No, that I have not; I never thought of that. But, of course, I will get it and return it to Mr. Croly. Nay, I will, if you please, go with you at once to the person of whom the money was borrowed."

"You'd oblige me if you would."

"Oh, I'll go with you with pleasure! Certainly it ought to be returned, but it never occurred to me."

"There is," said Sir John, "one more question I wish to ask, before we go: did you authorize my son to make any bets for you on the ground?"

"I asked him to lay seventy pounds to forty for me, and gave him the money to do so. That was the only bet he made on my account, and, of course, I wish now that he had not made that."

"Is it usual for one gentleman to make bets for another?"

"Oh, nothing is more common than that. But," he added, with a smile, "will you allow me, now, to ask *you* one question?"

"Certainly, certainly," replied Sir John.

"Well, being quite at a loss to know where you obtained all your knowledge of these matters, I feel, of course, anxious to be informed. Have you any objection to state who told you?"

"No one told me," replied Sir John. "I was on the ground myself. I was coming to town, and seeing a large number of persons assembled, I stopped the carriage, and alighted, and was near my son the whole of the time. You will hence perceive the cause of my anxiety to ask you these questions; and I feel obliged by the candid manner in which you have answered them."

D'Almaine bowed and rose with Sir John; and when George had joined them below, they proceeded to the house of the Artful.

Sir John seemed amazed at being conducted to a common-looking public-house, and said at the door, "Are you going in here?"

"The person of whom the money was borrowed," replied D'Almaine, "is the landlord of this house."

"Oh," said Sir John, as he followed him in, with an expression which denoted the existence of a feeling very nearly allied to that of disgust—"oh."

"Ben!" cried D'Almaine, having entered the private parlour; and Ben at once appeared, without his coat, it is true, but with something in the similitude of an apron, of which the depth was about six inches—no more. "Ben," pursued D'Almaine, with a dexterous wink, "I want the I.O.U. which Mr. Croly gave you yesterday for that hundred. You recollect it, do you not?"

"Do I recollect I was alive?"

"Well, where is it? I forgot to ask you for it when I paid you last night."

"If you had," replied Ben, who received another wink, "you would 'nt have had it! I *think* I know business a leetle better than that, if it's only a leetle. It belongs to Mr. Croly; and of course I should 'nt think of such a thing as that of giving it to any other flesh."

"Well, I want it to give to Mr. Croly."

"*Haven't* I sinews enough in my arm to hand it to him myself? An I.O.U., sir," he added, turning to George, "is an I.O.U. It's what I call a sacred dockiment; and although I'd trust Mr. D'Almaine with any amount of untold money, it's against my principles to give an I.O.U. to any flesh but the owner. Here it is."

"Mr. Croly is of course a friend of yours?" said Sir John.

"I look, sir, upon every man as a friend which isn't an enemy."

"But you *know* him well?"

"Till yesterday, I did n't know him from Adam."

"What! lend a hundred pounds to a man of whom you know nothing!"

"Well, it may seem strange, at first sight; but I did it."

"Well, but tell me, my good man—I beg of you to tell me—what could have induced you to lend a hundred pounds to a perfect stranger like Mr. Croly—a man of whom you know nothing, and whom you never saw before?"

"His character induced me to do it—his character."

"But what could you possibly know of his character?"

"I got it from Mr. D'Almaine," replied Ben, who, although at first slightly confused, now saw his way clearly. "He told me he was a

gentleman, which I could see from his appearance, and did n't much want to be told that; but he also told me he was a man of honour, and the son of Sir John Croly, a jolly old gentleman, worth about a mint! That's the sort of character I had of him; and of course I could n't help lending a hundred to a man like that."

"Then, of course, you hold Mr. D'Almaine responsible?"

"Well, I don't suppose that he would have allowed me, in any case, to lose the money. I've always found Mr. D'Almaine a perfect gentleman, always up right and down straight; and when people want any money of me, why all they've got to do is to get him to say it's all right."

"Well," said Sir John, "I could n't conceive what induced you to lend my son this hundred pounds; but I see now: you lent it on Mr. D'Almaine's responsibility."

"Your son, sir!" rejoined the Artful, with a well-assumed expression of amazement. "Have I then the honour of addressing Sir John Croly?"

"My name is Croly," replied Sir John.

"Bless my soul alive! I beg ten thousand pardons. I'm proud, Sir John, to see you. Pray what'll you have to take?"

"I thank you, nothing."

"Oh! Do me the honour to take a glass of pale sherry. I've got some of the very finest in nature! Charlotte!" said he, addressing his wife, who was in the bar, "A bottle of pale sherry, as quick as life! Now, excuse me, Sir John," he added, "you'll excuse me; but how came you to know about this I.O.U.? I'm sure I never said a word about it to flesh."

"I saw you receive it," replied Sir John. "I happened to be at the time on the ground."

"Oh, that accounts for the milk in the cocoa-nut! You were on the ground! Well, I wondered how you could know; but this clears it all up. Well, Sir John, now did you ever in your life see such a race?"

"I never saw one before. But it appeared to me that, had he chosen, the loser might have been the winner."

"His inside went all at once," said the Artful.

"Then he was distinctly told when to let it go! I myself heard the man who gave him the sponge say, 'Now, then: this round;' and he almost immediately afterwards staggered. Every man who lost money on that race was robbed."

"I should n't mind a hundred to know who that was," said the Artful, as he looked at D'Almaine, with great significance. "Now, Sir John, do me the honour to try that."

Sir John poured out about half a glass, which he drank, and approved of, and then put a sovereign on the table.

"Did n't I ask you," said the Artful, "to do me the honour, Sir John, to take a glass of wine?"

"Well; have I not taken one?"

"You have. But *did* I ask you to pay for it?"

"No; but that's, of course, understood."

"Not by me, Sir John: I don't do business so. I'll not *have* it, Sir John!"

"Then give it to the servants. Good morning. I have to apologise for having given you so much trouble," he added, turning to D'Almaine, with whom he shook hands, and then left with George.

"Now," said George, "I do not pretend to know exactly your object in calling upon D'Almaine; but, if it were to ascertain the truth or falsehood of my statement, I hope that you are perfectly satisfied."

"I am satisfied on two points," replied Sir John; "but I am anything but satisfied with your conduct on the whole. I hate hypocrisy, George!—I hate it intensely! If you had a desire to witness this race, why couldn't you gratify that desire without saying that you were anxious to attend a meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel? George! if you would but act like a *man*, you would be to me a comfort, instead of a curse!"

"I ascertained that I had been misinformed about that meeting."

"And, *therefore*, you dressed in that dashing style, and went to associate with blacklegs and thieves."

"I was *wrong* in going: I admit that I was wrong; but I associated with no bad characters, to my knowledge."

"I do n't mean to say that I think D'Almaine one of them: I regard him as one of their victims. That young man is ruined—I see that clearly. They have got him in their grasp, and will hold him till they've drained him, and then they'll contemptuously cast him off. But, D'Almaine," he added, thoughtfully, "D'Almaine—had he not something to do with those bills?"

"Pray do not revive that dreadful subject."

"But is not this the man?"

"It is he who got them cashed."

"He is the man who *cached* them and then held forth those frightful threats!"

"What D'Almaine!"

"The very man."

"You amaze me!"—said George, who knew well that he had suggested this course to D'Almaine, as being the only means left of inducing Sir John to pay the bills.—"I was not aware of that."

"Nor was I," rejoined Sir John, "until some time afterwards, when, on further investigation, I ascertained the fact. Therefore, shun him!—shun him, George, as you would a viper!"

"I will!" replied George. "Henceforth I'll have no more to do with him!"

"Upon your honour?"

"Upon my honour. No! Had I *known* the fact, instead of being friendly with him I should have despised him. And now," he continued with great humility, "may I hope that you will forgive all my follies of yesterday? I admit that I erred, but not to the extent you at first imagined: I erred in associating with this D'Almaine, but as you are aware, I erred in ignorance."

"George," all that I require of you is to act like a man! I have no

wish to withhold from you *any* source of rational enjoyment, I have no desire to put you under any restraint: nor would I, George, if I could trust you. It, of course, gives me pain to revert to the past, but your career has been hitherto characterized by the vilest duplicity! Change all this: substitute integrity for hypocrisy—truth for falsehood—ingeniousness for deceit—and you will find that my heart instead of being turned against you, will beat for you far more warmly than ever. But,” he added, as they approached Lejeune’s house, “we’ll say no more on this painful subject, now. Remember, George, what I have said.”

Having arrived at Lejeune’s, Sir John was greeted by Juliana and the Widow with the most affectionate warmth.

“I thought,” said Juliana, “that we were to have had the pleasure of your company to breakfast! Why did you not come?”

“My dear,” replied Sir John, “I was engaged.”

“You were engaged to take breakfast with us,” said Juliana, “and I don’t know that we shall forgive you for allowing any other engagement to interfere.”

Sir John—taking her delicate hands in his—gazed and smiled, and kissed her brow.

“Now,” said he, “while you people are deciding upon what you intend to do this fine morning, I’ll go and have a chat with friend Lejeune.”

“But we cannot decide without you!” said Juliana.

“Oh, I am entirely at your disposal! I promise to agree to anything you may propose.”

“I have something to propose,” said Charles. “I have to propose that you leave me out of the question, as I wish to remain at home.”

“Well,” said Sir John, as he turned to Juliana, “then we’ll leave him out of the question. We can spare him, can we not?”

Juliana was silent.

“Or,” continued Sir John, who saw at a glance the object Charles had in view; “suppose Mrs. Wardle and I take a turn round the Park, and leave you to prevail upon Charles to follow us? Will *that* do? I’ll leave him in your hands. I’ll have nothing more to do with him. Mrs. Wardle, will you do me the pleasure to accompany me?”

“I shall be indeed happy to do so,” replied the Widow.

“George, will you go with us, or have you any engagement?”

“I have no particular engagement,” replied George. “I did think of going to the Panorama.”

“Then, by all means, go. We all dine together, of course. And now Mrs. Wardle, while you are preparing, I’ll go and see how friend Lejeune is getting on. Let me know when you are ready.”

“Have you anything particular to do this morning?” enquired Juliana, approaching Charles with an expression of timidity, while the Widow and George were conversing at the window.

“I have,” replied Charles. “I have something particular to communicate to you.”

Juliana blushed, and felt somewhat embarrassed, when Charles took

her hand, and having affectionately pressed it, said, "It is nothing very dreadful, believe me. Now, run away and assist Mrs. Wardle. Well, old fellow," he added, when Juliana and the Widow had left the room, "how do you like London, now?"

"The same as ever," replied George. "It is a place to be visited; not virtuously to live in."

"That is a sweeping censure, indeed! If true, all but visitors want strength of mind to resist the temptations to vice which surround them. Now, experience has proved that these visitors are in general more vicious while they are here than the inhabitants themselves. The majority of them at least come expressly with the view of indulging in those vices which they cannot with equal impunity indulge in at home. I believe that in proportion to the population, there are more virtuous persons living habitually in London than are to be found in your *pure* provincial towns, of which the inhabitants in the aggregate form one chaotic mass of hypocrisy!"

"Is not this censure equally sweeping and severe?"

"It is, but more just."

"But why should there be more hypocrisy in provincial towns than in the metropolis?"

"Because it is found to be a far more profitable trade."

"You mean religious hypocrisy, of course?"

"I do. *Here* a man gets but little by being a hypocrite: it is not worth his while to assume the mask; but there it is regarded as one of the chief sources of success. From the journeyman banker to the journeyman baker—from the mayor to the mace-bearer—all put it on, with a view to the reputation of being honourable men; as if it were possible for pseudo sanctity and honour to co-exist! Look at your particular saints in the provinces. What are they? Slimy vipers! subtle, scheming, crafty knaves, who, while cringing to all above them, try to crush all beneath them."

"I admit," said George, "that many by whom piety is assumed, would, if weighed in the balance, be found wanting; and I fear that some of those who are invested with authority, have, with prayers on their lips, base designs in their hearts; but I nevertheless think that you are much too severe, ascribing, as I do, the fact of hypocrisy in the provinces being so conspicuous, to the proneness which exists in all small communities to magnify faults."

"God alone knows their hearts," rejoined Charles. "We can judge only by their acts, and it is notorious that they who envelop themselves in the cloak of religion pursue practices of which the turpitude is even greater than that of professional thieves."

"Well, I am glad to find that you have so high an opinion of the virtue of those who live in the metropolis. Certainly they who reside in the country ought to surpass them in virtue, having, as they have, ample time for reflection; while here, in the midst of this round of excitement, there appears to be no time for reflection at all!"

"He who has been accustomed to it feels as much alone while walking in the midst of this excitement, as he would if he were walking in

a wilderness. You, for example, would soon become reconciled to it: you would very soon be able to walk and think without being more disturbed by this bustle and noise than you are in the country by the singing of the birds."

At this moment the Widow returned with Juliana, and Sir John immediately afterwards followed, and having expressed himself satisfied with the progress Lejeune was making towards a state of convalescence, left the house with the Widow and George, who, on being released, went to call upon the Artful, partly in order to return the I.O.U., and partly with the view of ascertaining from D'Almaine the nature and substance of his private conversation with Sir John.

D'Almaine was there, and as George entered the room in which he and the Artful were engaged in laying plans for the future, they congratulated him warmly on his recent escape.

"I have to thank you for it," said George, "and do with all my heart. It was done well by both of you, excellently well."

"A leetle near the mark!" observed the Artful.

"It could not have been done better. He swallowed it all. Here's your I.O.U.; keep it until you receive the money."

"Very well. But I say! he's nothing like a bad sort!"

"No; all I have to complain of is that he looks most infernally sharp after *me*."

"Well! then you must look sharp after him, that's all! Now let's have a leetle lunch. I've a howdacious ham in cut, besides a tidy tongue."

"Then produce them," said George, as the Artful rang the bell, "I had but a poor breakfast."

"What did Sir John say when he left here?" inquired D'Almaine.

"Was he satisfied?"

"Yes; but we'll go into particulars by-and-bye."

"Will you walk with me presently: I'm going to claim forfeit of that fellow against whom I was to have fought a main of cocks this evening."

"What, has he called off?"

"No, he can't raise the money; therefore the twenty pounds aside down he forfeits of course. I suppose you must stick to the governor to-day?"

"I must dine with him."

"All right: I understand. But let us see you to-night. We'll get something up to amuse you."

"I should like to see the white dog you talk so much about."

"I'll have him here to-night. He shall kill a few rats, just for practice."

"Now, gents!" cried the Artful, as the waiter appeared, "here's the ham, and here's the tongue, and here's beef, and here's pickles!—pitch into the whole mob, and don't be afraid!"

They then commenced, and having had a hearty meal, D'Almaine left with George, to claim the forfeit.

They had scarcely however quitted the house, when the Widow, addressing Sir, John, said "There's George!"

"George!" cried Sir John, who had returned that way from the park quite by accident; "so there is, and with that wretch D'Almaine. Now, my dear madam, don't take the slightest notice: we'll follow him—he shall see me, and then he'll know that I have seen him."

"Then he took it all in?" said D'Almaine, as Sir John and the Widow approached them.

"He swallowed the whole," replied George.

"All I was afraid of," resumed D'Almaine, laughing, "was that I.O.U. I was afraid that Ben would hesitate. But he did it very well. He, of course, felt certain of having it again."

"Deceitful wretch," murmured Sir John as he passed them, looking at George with an expression of disgust.

George saw him, and started; but immediately followed, and said, "I am telling D'Almaine that from this hour—"

"Away," interrupted Sir John, "I have done with you. I'll hear no explanation. I'll not hear a word—not a word!—there's an end of it all."

"Well, but surely—"

Sir John and the Widow crossed over the road, and left George with his friend D'Almaine.

"Dear Sir John," said the Widow, anxiously, "What is it that thus disturbs you?"

"Nothing that shall annoy you," replied Sir John. "Let us step in here," he added, as he stopped at a confectioner's.

"Indeed," said the Widow, "I do not need any refreshment."

"I want you to allow me to leave you here a few minutes."

"But you will not follow him?"

"I will not: nor will I be absent long."

Having led her into a private room, and begged of her not to feel in the slightest degree alarmed, he left her there, and went over to the Artful.

"I wish to have a word with you in private," said he, as the Artful came forward and bowed.

"Oh! Sir John, I beg pardon. Step in here, Sir John."

"Oblige me with a pen and ink?"

"By all means, Sir John."

"There," said Sir John, having drawn the cheque. "There's a cheque for a hundred pounds in exchange for my son's I.O.U."

"Sir!" cried the Artful, with a stare of amazement, "I returned it this morning!"

"I know you did; but you have it now: he brought it back. I know all about it!"

"Well, Sir John, if you know all about it, why, you know all about it, and t'aint my fault. I certainly have got the paper again."

"Then let me have it at once: here's the cheque: I'm in haste."

The Artful produced the I.O.U., and received the cheque in exchange.

"Now," said Sir John, "you can lend him all the money you please! but not another shilling will I ever pay for him. Nor would I have paid this had it not been to prove the peculiarly *sacred* character of his honour."

"Well, but Sir John, Sir, I hope you don't *think*—"

Sir John put his cheque book in his pocket, and left without condescending to hear another word.

"Now, my dear Adelaide," said he, on his return, "I am at your service."

The Widow, who was delighted to see him again so soon, took out her purse to pay for a tart which she had ordered, but left untouched.

"What have you had," he enquired.

"This tart," replied the Widow.

"Well," said Sir John, as he looked at her and smiled, "this must, to a great extent, have interfered with your appetite. You'll not be able, I am sure, to enjoy your dinner unless you have that which I shall prescribe."

"Indeed, dear Sir John, I want nothing."

"Have you any cherry-brandy," he enquired of the person in attendance. "If you have, bring two glasses. I am not going to make you tipsy, Adelaide," he added; "but some cherry-brandy we must have."

And they had it. They sat, and sipped, and conversed for some time; but all that the Widow was able to ascertain was, that George—for whom she endeavoured to intercede—associated with persons with whom he, Sir John, had forbidden him to associate, and that she should know more anon.

Now, during their absence, Juliana and Charles were deeply engaged in the discussion of that which to them was the most important subject in the world. He had hinted at the cause of his wishing to remain at home—he had, in fact, stated that he was anxious to communicate something of a character not very dreadful;—but whether she shrewdly guessed what that something was, and trembled to hear it, or fancied that it might be more effectually communicated some other time, certain it is, that immediately after Sir John, with George and the Widow, had left the house, Juliana ran up to her chamber.

Charles thought this strange!—of course he thought it strange. "Could she have misunderstood me," he enquired of himself. "I thought I said distinctly that I wished to speak to her, and yet she continues to keep aloof? Shall I send for her? Will it be correct to send for her? Why should it not be? I will—yet stop—she may presently be here."

He paced the room impatiently and waited. He waited—by love's suspense chronometer an hour! although scarcely five minutes by any other chronometer in the world—and, when he found that he was unable to endure it any longer, he rang the bell, and sent her maid to intimate to her that her presence below would not be at all displeasing.

Having received this intimation Juliana appeared, and, as she entered the room, Charles, with an expression of gaiety which, however, could not conceal his embarrassment, said, "Did you understand that I wished to be alone?"

Juliana was silent.

"Did I say," pursued Charles, "or did I merely dream that I said that I had something to communicate to you?"

"I understood you to say so."

"Then, why run away?"

"Forgive me," said Juliana, faintly.

"Forgive you!" he exclaimed, with a smile of admiration. "Forgive you! Will you ever run away from me again?" he added playfully. "Promise me that you never will and I'll forgive you! Do you promise?"

"I do."

"Very well: then you are forgiven. See what a forgiving creature I am! And now," he continued, as he led her to a chair, "I have a few questions to ask before I communicate that, which I am not quite sure I have not communicated by virtue of a peculiar species of electricity before. Juliana, did it ever occur to you that I loved you?"

Juliana slightly started, met his gaze for an instant, and then cast her eyes upon the carpet.

"Did you ever think—did you ever conceive it to be possible—did you ever dream that I loved you?"

Juliana was still silent; but she *blushed*—well no matter how deeply—she blushed.

"Did such an idea," pursued Charles, "even in your most romantic moments ever enter into your imagination?"

"I have thought," replied Juliana, timidly, "I certainly have thought that you had some affection for me."

"That will not do! Affection! If I cannot love you—absolutely love you—more than all the world, I'll not love you at all, if I can help it!"

"Certainly," said Juliana, "we ought to love each other."

"Why, of course, we ought."

"I mean as brothers and sisters."

"Aye! but that's not what I mean. I mean that we—that is to say you and I—ought to love each other so dearly that Heaven, while smiling upon the record, will marvel that the confession should have been so long withheld. But how is this confession to be made? I don't pretend to be at all deep in the mysteries of a formal declaration; but it appears to me that I have something extra to do seeing that it is not alone your physical loveliness I admire, but your amiable disposition, pure mind, and gentle spirit! Now, how am I to go to work? Teach me? What am I to say? Give me some idea? That I love you, Juliana,—that I love you with all the tenderness and ardour of a man—you know!—and, I knowing also, do not require to be told, that you love me—aye! and that with all the purity, and fervour which characterize the most amiable of your sex I know, and, therefore, shall not think of demanding any confession of you! Still I feel that there is something wanted to constitute a regular declaration!—something to make it complete! Now, what is that something? What have I to say? Come, come! you might help me a little! Will you not in this extremity assist me at all?"

"Do you really think," said Juliana, with a timid smile, "that you need my assistance?"

"Why, of course. How should I know what to say? I have had no experience! Come, give me a notion—a key to what is usual?"

"How is it possible for me to do so?"

"Don't you know at all what is customary on these occasions?"

"I know that you are a kind, good soul," said Juliana, "and that you have adopted this playful course in order that I might not feel embarrassed. Believe me, I appreciate the motive; and, as regards my love for you, dear Charles, you do not wish me to confess it, and I will not deny it."

"Juliana," said Charles, having kissed her brow fervently, "my own Juliana,—for you are my own—I have long felt—Witchcraft," he added, with a smile of gaiety on perceiving tears spring into her eyes. "Witchcraft, doubtless, inspired me with the feeling that we were destined for each other, and so I told my father and yours."

"Have you?" enquired Juliana, anxiously, "have you then spoken to them on the subject?"

"Of course!"

"And—and what did they say?"

"They said, Juliana, that they believed that we were worthy of each other!"

"Bless them!—bless them!" exclaimed Juliana, as Charles passionately pressed her to his heart. "Oh!" she added, bursting into tears, "I am so happy—so very, very happy!"

"Indeed!" said Charles, drying his eyes privately. "Indeed! happy and in tears! What a happy creature Niobe must have been. Am I to infer from the fact of your being happy when you weep that you are wretched when you smile? Come, this will never do—this will never do at all. There," he added, after a pause, during which they gazed at each other with an expression of the most intense affection. "There now, run away, I have nothing more to say to you now: run away. Having succeeded in making you so wretched I am happy."

Juliana, however, did not "run away." She lingered still, and wept and smiled, and clung to Charles, as they paced the room with hearts full of rapture, and thus they continued locked in each others arms until they saw Sir John and the Widow approaching, when she yielded to another sweet embrace, and having blessed him with fervour, disappeared.

"Well, Charles," said Sir John, as he and the Widow entered the room; "still alone, I perceive. You must have been very dull?"

"Not at all;" replied Charles, with a smile of great significance, which not only Sir John but the Widow understood—all having been explained to her during their absence—"not at all! I hope that you have had a pleasant walk?"

"Have you forgotten," said Sir John, "that I have had the society of Mrs. Wardle?"

"Well, it didn't occur to me at the moment. Of course it couldn't be otherwise than pleasant?"

"Really," said the Widow, "you gentlemen spoil us. You are so complimentary, so kind, so polite, that you cause us sometimes to forget your superiority!"

"Our superiority!" said Charles, turning to Sir John, "when they carry all before them, and when it takes, moreover, all our time to please them! They are, doubtless, impressed deeply with a sense of our superiority! Why, we are their slaves!—we seem to live expressly for them! St. Peter, indeed, calls them the weaker vessels; but that weakness is the germ of their strength! We are morally weaker than they! for what is it but weakness which prompts us to love them, to praise them, to court them, and even to adore them? I hold this to be a species of infatuation, which indeed, develops nothing but weakness. Superiority, forsooth! Why they know well that they are the superior swells! St. Peter is their friend; but what says St. Peter?—'Ye wives be in subjection to your husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.' Does this show our superiority? He knew their influence!—in short, he being a married man, knew, of course all about it. But," he added, with a smile, "I shall have a lecture presently, if I continue to talk thus in the presence of Mrs. Wardle. Have you seen George?"

"Yes," replied Sir John, "I have seen him."

"He'll be here directly, no doubt," said Charles. "Now," he added, looking at his watch, "you have just sufficient time to dress for dinner."

"I'll go," said Sir John, as George knocked at the door—"I'll be back in ten minutes."

He then left the room and met George coming in, but although he looked at him, he said not a word. Nor did a single word pass between them during dinner. The Widow, to whom Juliana had confided the substance of all that transpired between her and Charles, was in excellent spirits, and so indeed was Charles; but Sir John, although he tried to subdue the feelings which George's conduct had excited, found it perfectly impossible to be gay. He therefore left unusually early, and George left with him; and as they walked side by side, Sir John said, "Where is that I.O.U.?"

"I have destroyed it," replied George; "I destroyed it this morning."

"Very well," returned Sir John, who could scarcely control his indignation; "*very* well." And not another word was uttered until they reached the hotel, when Sir John summoned Corney and retired.

Now, Corney, who felt quite at home in this establishment, had become a great favourite of the Porter, from whom he had drawn the secret of George having gone out the preceding night when Sir John had retired to rest, and conceiving it to be extremely probable that when all was secure George would go out again, he made up his mind to follow him, in order to see where he went, and to ascertain what he went for.

He therefore, on being dismissed for the night, prevailed upon his friend to tell him when George went out; and as the porter had been instructed to let George know when Sir John had retired, the required information was given to both, and both very soon left the hotel.

They had however scarcely left, when Sir John rang his bell, and the Porter, who went up, was, on being questioned closely, constrained to admit that Corney was out.

"Strange," said Sir John, "very strange. Desire him to come immediately on his return."

"Is there nothing I can do, Sir John?" inquired the porter.

"I wish to see him; therefore, send him up the moment he returns."

The porter of course promised to do so, and left him.

Meanwhile, Corney—enveloped in a great coat four sizes too large for him, and muffled-up in a shawl of extraordinary dimensions—followed George, of course unconscious of the alarming fact of his having been summoned by Sir John.

"Now, I wonder," thought he, "what that beauty is up to; I doubt he's after no good. And yet, perhaps, he is going to see life. Well, I've often heard of life; and, doubtless, life ought to be seen. But what sort of life do they call life? That wholly puzzles me. Now, I know town's the place for improvement. I know I've improved vastly since I've been here. I've picked up a whole mob of words in that kitchen which'll right on astonish the rurals at home. If, therefore, to see life is to improve, I now stand an excessively out-and-out chance; inasmuch as life ought to enlarge the inaccessible incomprehensiveness of the highly intellectual intelligence of the mind. That's the ticket!—that's what makes the Londoners about five-and-twenty times as wide-awake as weasels. Hallo! here you are," said he, as George entered the house of the Artful; "now, then, for a taste of this incomprehensible life."

He followed, and called for a glass of ale, which he leisurely sipped as he stood at the bar, while George and D'Almaine was in the little bar-parlour.

Presently, he heard George swearing aloud—but had, of course, no idea of its being in consequence of the I.O.U. having been given to Sir John—and the next moment saw him come to the door in a rage, and summon the landlord from the bar.

"What's up now," thought Corney, as high words arose between George and the landlord. "There's something amiss—and yet this may be life in its cradle: I shall see it by-and-bye, perhaps, in all its youth and beauty. Anything going forward up stairs?" he inquired of a man who was standing beside him at the bar.

"Ratting," replied the man.

"Oh!" said Corney, who did not at all understand what was meant.

"Ratting: ah! There appears to be a good many people going up."

"The room is always full when there's anything of a match."

"Ah. But, ratting: what's that?"

"What d'you mean?" cried the man, with a scowl. "You don't know what it is, I dessay!"

"I don't, indeed," returned Corney. "I've only just come up to town."

"Well, if you don't know, I'll tell you. They put a number of rats—say twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty, or a hundred—into the pit, and the dog that kills 'em quickest wins the match."

"Oh, ratting!" cried Corney: "I see."

"A sort of rat hunt, with all the rats ketched."

"I understand. Will you have a glass of ale?"

"I'd rather have a 'drain o' gin."

"Well, then, have it," said Corney, who emptied his glass, and then ordered two "drains" of gin.

By this time, the storm in the bar-parlour had subsided; and shortly afterwards, George and D'Almaine re-appeared, and proceeded up stairs with the landlord.

"Will you go up?" said Corney, addressing his friend.

"They charges sixpence a-piece," replied the man.

"Never mind," said Corney; "come along; I'll pay for you. I don't like to go alone. Will you come?"

The man consented, and they went up together, and found the room crowded with persons, of whom the majority were, perhaps, the most ferocious-looking fellows that ever assembled within a corresponding space.

"Now," said D'Almaine, addressing George, "If you want to see a dog kill in style, my Blazer will show you how it ought to be done. But, first," he added, aloud, "if there be a dog in the room that anyone happens to be sweet upon, I'll back mine against him for a tenner or a twenty to kill five-and-twenty rats, and give him five pounds weight."

"Mine shall kill against yours for a fiver," said a fellow who had a dog under his arm.

"Yours!" cried D'Almaine; "yours is nearly double the weight."

"Can't help that. I didn't make him. Here he is, what he is. If you like to make the match, post the money."

"Well, I don't mind for a fiver: the weight's too much, but I only want to show what he *can* do."

"I'll bet a tenner on the little one," cried George.

"Done!" cried the Artful. "Make it twenty if you like?"

George, whom D'Almaine, had assured that no dog alive could beat his, replied, "Well; then twenty let it be."

The rats were produced and counted into the pit—which was formed of a sheet of zinc, three feet wide, making a circle of about four yards in diameter—and D'Almaine—having won the toss—put his dog amongst them.

Two time-keepers and a referee, of course had been appointed, and when the dog had done his work—which he did with amazing quickness—they agreed upon the time without the slightest hesitation.

The pit was then cleared and fresh rats were produced, which the other dog killed even quicker than D'Almaine's!—the difference was not more than three or four seconds, but quite sufficient to cause George to lose his twenty pounds.

Now this "sport," Corney didn't like. The blood of the dead and dying rats produced a feeling of sickness which was anything but agreeable. He, therefore, turned to his friend, and said, "I'll tell you what it is: I can't stand much more of this game. I must go and have some brandy!"

"Oh," said his companion, "stop and see the next match. I'll stand a glass when we go down."

Well! Corney did stop, although he felt very queer: but before the match was over he missed his friend! He thought it strange!—very strange—but conceiving that his friend might feel equally queer, and had gone down to order the brandy, he followed, but found no friend there.

"Well," thought he, as he stood at the bar, "he needn't have sneaked off so! I didn't want him to pay for the brandy! He thought, I suppose, I couldn't pay for it myself! What do I care? Let him go."

He then ordered sixpennyworth of brandy and water; but when he was about to pay for it, he found the pocket in which he usually kept his money turned inside out! This he thought even more strange than the absence of his friend! He felt his other pockets: they were all out for an airing! He felt for his watch, and even that was gone!

"I have been robbed!" said he, to the man who had mixed the brandy and water—"plundered of everything!"

"Can't help that," replied the man, "I want the money for this six of brandy."

"I tell you I've been robbed of every penny, watch and all! Did you see that man come down stairs I was standing here with?"

"I don't know what man you stood here with; but you are the only man that's been down since the matches commenced."

"I am! that's lucky. I shall catch him yet. I'll stand here till he *does* come down, and then I'll pounce upon him!"

"Well, but who's to pay for this six of brandy?"

"Stop a bit: stop till I get my money back."

"Stop till you get it back. If you never get it back, who's to pay for it then?"

"What's all this about," demanded the Artful, as he came down, followed by George and D'Almaine. "What's the row?"

"This fellow," said the barman, "has ordered six of brandy, and now he pretends he's been robbed."

"Pretends," cried Corney, indignantly. "There's no pretending in the case! Look here. They've turned every blessed individual pocket I have about me inside out, and stole my watch into the bargain!"

"Where was this done?" enquired the Artful.

"Up stairs," replied Corney, "while the rats were being killed."

George—who had recognised his voice in a moment, but who had kept back until he heard that Corney had been up stairs—now came forward, fully convinced of his having been seen, and looking at him fiercely, said, "*How* came you here?"

"Beg pardon," replied Corney, who now of course saw that he had discovered himself. "Indeed, Sir, I beg pardon: but I have been robbed."

"Serve you right!" cried George, with an expression of ferocity.

"What business had you here?"

"Do you know him, Sir?" enquired the Artful.

"Know him," replied George. "I know him."

"Well, then, we'll find out who robbed him if we can."

"Remain here till I leave," said George, sternly. "Do you hear?"

"I'll not go, Sir, till you go," replied Corney, humbly. And when George had entered the room with D'Almaine he begged of the Artful to find out the thief.

"Now," said George, while Corney, with tears in his eyes, and without a pocket-handkerchief to wipe them, was mournfully describing his absent friend, "how came that infernal fellow here?"

"Do you think Sir John sent him?" inquired D'Almaine.

"I don't know what to think," replied George; "I can hardly think him guilty of such an act of meanness. Besides, his object has ever been to *conceal* all that he has discovered."

"Then of course he would not employ his servant to find you out?"

"No," said George, "no: he was never sent by him. But how came the fellow here?"

"Perhaps he came by mere accident?"

"Well, but look at the time! He has no right to be out at this time of the night!"

"If, like you, he slipped out unknown to Sir John, you can soon make that all right with him."

"Yes, if it *should* be so—but then there's the 'if'! And yet I *can't* think that he has been sent as a spy."

"No, no; it isn't likely. You may make your mind easy on that point at once; and as for the other—if he came out merely for a spree—why, for his own sake, he'll not say a word to Sir John. I wouldn't let the thing disturb me. It certainly is strange that he should happen to come into the very house—but——"

"I'll be no longer in suspense," said George; "I'll ascertain at once. If you'll do me the favour to leave the room for five minutes, I'll have him in here."

"Shall I send him in?"

"Aye, do so," replied George, who immediately assumed a severely solemn aspect; "yes, do so."

Corney, who was anxiously watching for his friend, on hearing this summons, was about to leave his post, but was instantly stopped by the Artful.

"No, no," said he, "wait till they're all down, or as they must be pretty well all down now, come up with me into the room and point him out."

They accordingly went up together; but, alas! Corney's friend was not visible there, and as it was clear that that friend had decamped, the Victim, in obedience to George's summons, slowly entered the bar parlour.

"Now, sir," said George, with an expression of solemnity, "how came you here?"

"Beg pardon, sir," replied Corney tremulously, "I hope you'll forgive me. I only slipped out, sir, to see a little life."

"Life!" echoed George, in a tone of surpassing gravity, "life! In such life there is death!—death to virtue, to probity, to innocence!—

death to every sentiment of justice and of mercy!—death to those feelings which exalt the man above the grovelling level of the brute!”

“I know it’s wrong, sir,” said Corney; “I know it’s very wrong but I hope, sir, you’ll not tell Sir John of it.”

“Were he to know that you were *here*, he would on the instant discharge you. As for me, he knows *my* mission. He knows that it is to watch the progress of vice—to measure the strides of profligacy, and to note the baneful influence of corruption! He knows that my object is not like yours, the gratification of a morbid appetite, but to mark how innocence is betrayed—how virtue is snared—and how honour is blasted!”

“I hope you’ll forgive me: I hope you will, sir, and not tell Sir John.”

“I know not,” replied George, “whether I can, consistently with my duty to him, forbear; but if I do, it will only be on one condition, which is that you solemnly promise me never to enter a house of this description again.”

“I never will, sir; indeed I never will.”

“Remember that in houses of this character the scourges of society assemble—those scourges that are permitted to show by contrast how sweet is a life of rural purity and devotion.”

“I will remember; indeed I will. Then you’ll not tell Sir John, sir?”

“I’ll not. I feel that I ought to do so, but I’ll not. Now return. I’ll ascertain if your watch can be recovered, and follow shortly.”

Corney bowed, and having thanked him, left the house.

“Now,” said he, confidentially to himself, “I’ll not talk of flesh!—flesh I’ll not think about!—no! I’ll talk of angels—for if they didn’t know him, he’d deceive the whole lot. I *never*—there don’t say a word about deception—don’t breathe the name of hypocrisy after this. *Nothing* can come up to it! It’s what I call a right on excruciating something, which makes you feel while it lasts that your knowledge of the man is nothing more than one monstrous leviathan lie! His mission: yes, his mission. His mission to back a dog for twenty pounds against another, to worry the life out of five-and-twenty rats! Aye! but then he did this to watch the progress of vice, the strides of profligacy, and the influence of corruption!—he did it to mark how innocence was betrayed, how virtue was snared, and how honour was blasted! I remember every word. And if I didn’t know what I do know, what should I take him to be? But send I may live though, isn’t it awful? Isn’t it enough to make a man’s blood boil?—isn’t it enough to make him hate the sight of one who pretends to such out-and-out sanctity? Who can wonder at his passing for a pure and pious man? No one who knows him as I do. If I hadn’t known him so well, I of course should have swallowed it all. And he thinks I have swallowed it all—I know that’s what he thinks—because he don’t know I know what I know. That man ought to be a play actor. He can take any part, rough or smooth. He can speak like a parson, or swear like a trooper. He can pull a long face, or drink, laugh, and be jolly:—he can talk about innocence, virtue,

and faith, and bet an even tenner upon a rat-dog. Nothing comes amiss to him: I never saw his likeness—in fact, I don't think there's another of the sort. He gets over me altogether. But what a set of wretches, to have to deal with!—scourges, he calls them—the scourges of society—permitted or sent, like bugs and fleas, to prey upon the innocent which isn't wide awake. Well, one of these scourges scourged me pretty tidy! here seven-and-sixpence, besides the coppers, and old father's watch, worth all a pound, and a handkerchief which cost three-and-six when it was new. If he has such a haul about every a week, he'll soon be able to keep his horse and gig! But, how did he get the watch out?—that, puzzles me; not that it's a mite of use being puzzled about it—not a mite. I wonder he didn't take shirt and all! Now, I know what I'd do with that fellow: I wouldn't hang him, hanging's too good for him; he should have neither judge nor jury; I'd take him as he is, and I'd strip him to the hips, and tie his hands and feet fast, and lay him in that rat pit. I'd then get a hundred hungry out-sized rats and make them savage, and if they didn't teach him how to steal another watch and another pocket-handkerchief, and another seven-and-sixpence, it would be a very strange thing to me. And this is life! Well might George say, that in such life there's death. And that's how he gets over you. What he says about things is so true that you can't get a pull;—for how much virtue, how much innocence, how much justice, or how much mercy, was there round that blessed rat-pit! If he'd only act up to what he says, he'd do stunning; but he won't, and that makes him what he is—the cunningest card that ever deceived living flesh."

Now, as Corney's profoundest thoughts were engaged in this soliloquy, and as he unconsciously walked—notwithstanding his great coat and shawl—at the rate of five miles an hour, he perspired with such infinite freedom that he was pleased, highly pleased, when he reached the hotel; but what pen can describe the true nature of his feelings—what pencil can portray his intense dissatisfaction, on receiving that startling intelligence with which the swelling bosom of the porter teemed!

"What!" he exclaimed, with an aspect of horror. "Ah!" he added, after a pause, "you're only joking."

"I tell you," said the porter, "that if he's rung once he has rung a dozen times, and that he is even now waiting up to see you."

"Well, but do you, now, I say, upon your soul, now—do you only tell me this to frighten me?"

"It's a fact, as I'm a man. There you are," he added, as the bell rung again; "are you satisfied, now?"

"Well, but what am I to say? My life, though, here's a job! What excuse am I to make? I *could* make a thousand; but the question is, which of that thousand will do? I can't say I've been to see a friend, because I don't know a soul."

"I generally get over these things best when I tell the truth," observed the porter.

"Yes; but if I tell the truth I shall bring another into the scrape."

"Your young master, you mean?"

"Yes; and *that'll* not do."

"Well, you know your own business. I have always found the

truth answer the purpose best. At all events, if I were you, I'd lose no more time; I'd go up at once, and see him."

"Well, but I'm so stunning hot! I'm all over wet. The perspiration pours down me to such an extent that I'm like a hot shower-bath all over."

"So much the better; it will show that you were anxious to make haste home. There, go up at once. *You* know what to say."

"If I do may I be blessed! However! I must *go*!—and I should not be surprised if I have to go for good. As true as I'm alive, it's enough to make a man eat his head off. He couldn't want me at any other time! No, he must want me on this particular night, because—and, of course, *merely* because—I was out. Well! I'll go up, at all events, and hear what he says. I must make the best I can of it, but bad will be the best."

He accordingly went up to Sir John's room, and knocked, and on being desired to enter, he did so, and found that Sir John had been reading.

"Cornelius!" said Sir John, calmly, "Where have you been?"

"Just for a walk, Sir John," replied Corney, promptly.

"Why choose the night for a walk, when you're at liberty nearly the whole of the day?"

"I only thought I should like to have a walk, Sir John. I beg pardon, Sir John, for not naming it to you."

"Have you been walking *all* the time you have been out?"

"No, Sir John, not exactly *all* the time. I went in and had a glass of ale."

"Where?"

"I don't know the sign, Sir John; but it isn't far from here; perhaps nearly half a mile."

"Then you merely walked there and had this glass of ale, and walked back? You are sure that you went no where else?"

"Quite sure, Sir John!" replied Corney, who now began to think he was getting over it in style.

"How long did you remain in this house?"

"Perhaps five or ten minutes, Sir John."

"Oh,—five or ten minutes. Then you walked half a mile, stopped five or ten minutes, went *no* where else, but came back in a state of steaming perspiration, and did all this in three hours and a half! Is that what you wish me to believe?"

"I might have stopped longer, Sir John, than ten minutes."

"Did you stop an hour?"

"I might have stopped an hour."

"Then by dint of great exertion—for I perceive that you perspire very freely—you walked this mile in about two hours and a half!"

Corney, who was not prepared for this, and didn't at all know how to get over it—was silent.

"You had better," continued Sir John, "tell the truth. If you do so I may perhaps look over it; but if you continue to prevaricate—I'll take you back with me: yes, I'll take you back—but I'll discharge you, sir, immediately on our return."

"I dare not, Sir John, I dare not tell the truth."

"Dare not? Why not? Have you been in bad company?"

"I have, Sir John."

"I am sorry to hear it. I *thought*, Cornelius—"

"If," said Corney, who now felt that Sir John was about to deliver a lecture on the wrong subject—"If you'll only say, Sir John, you'll not tell Mr. George that I told you, you shall know the whole truth from beginning to end."

"George!" echoed Sir John, in a state of amazement, "George! what has he to do with it? Have you been out, then, for him?"

"No, Sir John, not *for* him, I have been out *with* him."

"With George? well, proceed."

"But you'll not let him know, Sir John?"

"No—no: proceed."

"I knew it was wrong—very wrong," pursued Corney; "but as Mr. George went out last night, and as he told the porter to-night to let him know when you had retired, I thought, as a matter of curiosity, Sir John, I'd follow him and see where he went to."

"How dare you, sir, assume the office of a spy?"

"I know it was wrong, Sir John, very wrong indeed; but you wished me to tell the whole truth."

"Did you not say that he went out *last* night?"

"Yes, Sir John."

"And is he out now?"

"He is; but for goodness sake, Sir John, don't let him know I told you."

"Well—well: go on."

"Well, Sir John, I followed him: I followed him into this public-house, and while I was at the bar he went into the bar-parlour."

"Did he not see you?"

"He might have seen me, Sir John; but didn't know me: I disguised myself in a great coat and shawl."

"Well?"

"By-and-bye he came out of the parlour with a gentleman—that dashing gentleman who was here, Mr. D'Almaine I think his name is—and they went up stairs with the landlord. I followed and found that some dogs were going to kill some rats in what they called a pit."

"And did George bet upon either of the dogs?"

"Yes, Sir John. He bet upon one dog and lost twenty pounds: but for Heaven's sake, Sir John, don't tell him I told you!"

"Did you happen to hear whose dog that was?"

"Yes, Sir John, Mr. D'Almaine's."

"And who won the money?"

"The landlord, Sir John. Well, the sight made me sick, and I went down stairs for a small glass of brandy; but when I felt for the money to pay for it, I found I'd been robbed of every individual thing!—silver, halfpence, handkerchief, and all!—they even took my old father's watch!"

"Well? Go on."

"Well, Sir John, I never felt so bad before in my life; and while I

was telling the people how I'd been robbed, I discovered myself, Mr. George knew my voice and ordered me into the bar parlour. Well, I felt so ill I didn't know what to do; but I begged of him not to tell you that I'd been there, and after he had told me that you knew that his object in going to such places was to see how innocence was betrayed—how virtue was snared, and how honour was blasted, he gave me a very severe lecture, and sent me home."

"And this is the truth?"

"The whole truth, Sir John, as I hope to be saved!"

"Very well, it shall go no farther: unless indeed you name it yourself, which of course you will not do seeing that if you do I shall be compelled to part with you at once. You may retire; but never again go out without leave or assume the vile office of a spy."

Corney bowed and withdrew, and having told his friend the porter that he had managed to get over it pretty well, he enjoined him not to say a word on the subject to George.

"Now," thought Sir John, when Corney had retired, "what *am* I to do? He is, I fear, incorrigible, and yet he must not be abandoned. No! to cast him off were to entail not only ruin upon him, but shame upon all connected with him. Bad as he is I have still a duty to perform; I must still try to win him back to that path of rectitude from which he has so lamentably strayed. Oh! what a noble youth he was—how kind, how generous, how affectionate—with a heart as free from guile as that of an infant, and a mind containing all the germs of intellect, what promise did he give of being a good, if not indeed a great man! What is he now? A rat-killer, a dog fancier, a badger drawer, a cock fighter—at once a patron and a victim of the dregs of society, an associate of the very scum of the earth and withal a most incomprehensible hypocrite! Can this grievous change be ascribed to any want of exertion or care on my part? Can I reproach myself with having in the most remote manner been the cause of this perversion of taste and intellect? True, I sent him to Cambridge; it is also true that in that accursed Barnwell his heart and mind were poisoned, but can I censure myself for this? It may be said that I ought to have nipped his profligacy in the bud; but did I not endeavour to do so by all the means at my command? and did he not on every occasion on which I discovered his delinquency declare with all the fervour of truth that he had resolved on abandoning such practices for ever? What could I do more? Have I not taken the utmost pains with him—treated him with all possible kindness—made every effort to ensure his happiness—checked him when I knew him to be wrong, and applauded him when I conceived him to be right? How, then, *can* I reproach myself? I feel that I cannot do it justly. Yet something must be done. He must not be cast off. He is now in the midst of temptation and must therefore no longer be here. When away from these scenes of senseless profligacy, I must, if possible, devise some novel means to reclaim him. I fear that all my efforts will be, as they have hitherto been, useless: still every conceivable means must be tried. I should not hold his reformation to be so hopeless were it not for his hypocrisy.

One knows neither when he is touched nor when he is not, for he has, unhappily, no respect for truth. That note in which he pledged his 'sacred honour' proves that he is not on his 'sacred honour' to be believed. There is the difficulty!—there is the curse! Were he a thoughtless profligate merely, he might with comparative ease be reclaimed, but as he is a deep designing hypocrite I fear that the case is hopeless although it *must* not be given up yet in despair."

Having made up his mind to return with George as soon as he could do so without causing his real motive to be suspected, Sir John rose early, and while at breakfast with Charles, Juliana, and the Widow, intimated his intention to leave town on the Monday.

"Monday!" exclaimed Juliana, "next Monday?" Do you mean the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, dear," replied Sir John.

"Then, indeed, Sir John, we cannot possibly spare you. You must stay another week with us at least!"

"Another week, my dear, may not have elapsed before I see you again. I came merely to see how you were all getting on, and as I find that you are getting on well my object of course is accomplished."

"Then you promise to come again within a week?"

"I cannot make any absolute promise, but I think it very likely that I shall do so!"

"Then, dear Mrs. Wardle can of course remain with me until you return?"

"You must settle that point between yourselves. I must leave that entirely to you."

"Well, but what do you want to go at all for?" enjoined Charles.

"I have some arrangements to make," replied Sir John, "some arrangements which I find it impossible to make here."

"Well," said Charles, who conceived that those arrangements might have reference to himself and Juliana. "I have nothing more to say on the subject. Then, of course, you return alone?"

"George will go with me."

"Do you want him to go?"

"Why he will have been here a week!"

"Yes! but I've not spent a day with him yet!"

"You have nearly the whole of to-day before you!"

"True! but I had no idea of his leaving so soon! Was he not up when he left?"

"I didn't see him."

"Well, then," said Charles, "if these ladies will allow me, I'll consign them to you, and spend the morning with old George."

"Well, we don't want him! Do we my dear?" said Sir John, addressing Juliana archly.

"I hope that he will dine with us," replied Juliana.

"Of course! That's understood!" returned Sir John. "Of course we *all* dine together."

Accordingly Charles immediately after breakfast took leave of Juliana, and called upon George whom he found somewhat languidly breakfasting alone.

"Well, old fellow," said Charles as he entered the room. "Why didn't you come over and breakfast with us? You *are* about the most modest creature I know. I suppose you'd no *formal* invitation?"

"I didn't rise till rather late," returned George, "I can't go to sleep till its time to get up. The noise which the carriages produce is worse than thunder."

"Well, you'll not have much more of it this time," said Charles. You leave, I understand, with the Governor on Monday."

"On Monday?"

"So he has just been telling us; and I therefore left the ladies with him for the purpose of spending the morning with you."

"Well," returned George, who of course understood that Sir John's chief object was to get him out of town. "That's kind—very kind. I am quite at your disposal."

"Now," said Charles, "before we go out for a stroll, I have a secret to communicate to you old fellow, which may—although I don't know why it should much—amaze you."

"A secret!" cried George, in the full expectation of its having reference to himself. "What is it?"

"It is that I am about to be married."

"Married!" cried George, who felt released on one hand, although galled on the other. "Married! Why to whom?"

"To whom should you *think*? Have your eyes of late been sealed?"

"You do not mean Miss Lejeune?"

"Why, whom else should I mean?"

"Well, but I thought you hinted to me the other day that Lejeune and his brother had been ruined."

"I did so in confidence: but what of that?"

"She has, perhaps, some property in her own right?"

"What do you mean?"

"Merely, Charles, that if she has not the Governor may withhold his consent to the match."

"I have his consent."

"Oh!" cried George, with an expression which effectually concealed his real feelings, "if that be the case there's an end of it. I wish you every possible happiness," he added, taking his hand and shaking it warmly. "May you have every joy permitted here and that eternal bliss promised hereafter. Well," he continued in tones of unusual gaiety "and when is it to be? Has the day been fixed?"

"No," replied Charles. "We have not got so far as that yet. In fact I've not yet obtained Juliana's consent."

"Indeed! But of course, you've no *doubt*—"

"Not the slightest. We understand each other exceedingly well, and I may venture to say that the marriage will take place as soon as Lejeune has sufficiently recovered to take part in the ceremony."

"Well! And do you intend to reside in town?"

"I don't know at present what arrangements may be made, but I believe that they are the cause of the Governor's leaving town so soon."

"Then he is going to make arrangements at home. Ah, I see. Well,

I've no doubt they'll be on a liberal scale. Does Mrs. Wardle return with him on Monday?"

"I believe not, in fact I feel sure that she will not. By the way," he added, smiling, "did you ever hear the Governor call her Adelaide?"

"Adelaide!" echoed George, with a momentary scowl. "Adelaide! Never."

"He called her Adelaide yesterday, inadvertently I believe, still as Adelaide he addressed her."

"Then, I suppose we are to have *two* marriages in the family."

"No," replied Charles, "I don't think that, although I should like her as a step-mother just as well as I do in her present position, and so would Juliana I know. Still I don't think that anything of that kind is contemplated."

"Well," returned George, "it may not be."

"I'll ask him one of those days," said Charles, laughing, "I'll put it to him whether it is to be a match or not. I'll tell him that you are most anxious to know."

"Nay, I am not anxious about it at all. Mrs. Wardle is a very virtuous person; her piety, moreover, is unquestionable, and I really do not know of one whom I should like as a step-mother so *well*."

"I'll certainly tell him you say so," said Charles. "But," he added, "there is no chance of that. They regard each other as brother and sister, but that anything beyond that is contemplated by either I don't for a moment believe."

"Well," said George, "I do not see why it should not be."

"Nor do I," returned Charles, whom the idea amused, "I'll *name* it to him if I live."

They then with an air of gaiety left the hotel, but although Charles took him to various exhibitions which he conceived could not fail to delight him, George was deeply engaged in his own private thoughts having reference to "Adelaide," Charles, and Juliana.

"Adelaide!" thought he, "it is high time for me to look out.—Adelaide!—the thing speaks for itself. He would never address her as Adelaide, unless he intended to make her his wife. Adelaide, indeed! I see it all as clearly as if it were done. His aim is to rob me of my birthright. This is to be his revenge. He has given his consent to this marriage—the marriage of a younger son with a girl without a shilling, in order that they and their children may be supported handsomely out of the estate, while he contemplates making this Adelaide his wife, that he may leave her the residue, if not absolutely, at least during life, and thus reduce *me*, who ought to have the whole, to a state of comparative beggary. I see it!—I see it!—cunning as he is, I see it all. I must henceforth regard him as my enemy—aye, as my greatest enemy—for who can be a greater enemy than he who seeks to rob a man of his birthright? I must be on the alert; I must watch events narrowly; I must *not* stand by tamely, and see myself robbed of that to which by nature I am entitled. He calls me a hypocrite!—well! all men are hypocrites; but which is the greater hypocrite—he who assumes the character of purity, with the view of securing his

rights, or he who, in order to beggar a man, wears the mask of paternal affection? Why he is a far greater hypocrite than I. He tries to generate the belief that he has for me all the affection a father should have for a son, while engaged in a series of deeply-laid schemes to deprive that son of his birthright. Does such a man deserve to be called father? Would that he were dead!"

That this style of reasoning tended to make George more satisfied with himself is a fact which scarcely need be recorded, seeing that however base men may be, they seek, if not a justification for their baseness, at least an excuse for its existence. He who injures another without an excuse hates himself; but if he can attach blame to him whom he injures—if he be able to conceive, without reference to proof, that that man designed to injure him, he at once pleads this as his justification. Thus the robber seeks to justify himself, on the ground that society is his enemy; and thus George, who had been up to that time unable to attach the slightest blame to Sir John—who knew that he had been kind and affectionate—who knew that he had done all that a father should do, and who could find no plea for disobedience, no reason to cast upon him any reproach—the very moment it entered into his imagination that Sir John was designedly working against him, he seized the idea to cherish as the means by which his conscience might in future be hushed.

Hence, during dinner that day, he watched Sir John with the feelings of an injured man, and noticed sufficient to strengthen his suspicions; but that which confirmed them—that which, in his view, placed Sir John's intentions towards the Widow beyond all doubt—was his undisguised politeness to her that evening at the opera, to which they all repaired, Charles having, as a compliment to George, secured a box in the morning. He then felt convinced that he saw in the Widow the future Lady Croly; and as he still cherished the thought that she was to be made Lady Croly solely in order to injure *him*, his feelings, although he concealed them, amounted to those of indignation.

That night, and during the whole of the next day, George was brooding. He went to church in the morning with those whom he now termed "the set;" he also dined with "the set;" and at night when Sir John had retired, he went to meet D'Almaine, to whom he had written a note, stating that he should be at the Artful's, to say "Good bye," as he had to leave Town in the morning.

Here his moodiness to some extent vanished; and as his principal object was to acknowledge the fact that he owed D'Almaine two hundred and fifty pounds, he alluded to it at once. "But," he added, "I'll pay you one of these days, old fellow. I'll send it up as soon as I can get it."

"All right," said D'Almaine; "don't be in a hurry about that. I don't want money; I'll let you know when I do, which will not be, it strikes me, *just yet*. But, I'll tell you what I'll do with you:—come, I'll give you a chance—I'm always unlucky when I go double or quits, but I'll give you three throws, if you like, to see whether you shall owe me five hundred or nothing."

"Agreed!" cried George, who was pleased with the proposition, being generally fortunate with the dice, "It's Sunday night, but never mind that; where's the box?"

The box and dice were produced, and George threw twenty-five.

"I shall lose it," cried D'Almaine, changing the dice; "I shall lose it!"

He threw, and got ten; he threw again, and got ten, the third time he threw, and got twelve!

The dice were loaded; but George, unconscious of that, at once gave him an I.O.U. for five hundred pounds.

"Well," said D'Almaine, "I never expected to win *that* game! Twenty five is an out and out go. But what'll you have? I'll stand anything you like! Let's have some champagne."

"Aye," said George, waspishly, "let's have something."

Champagne was ordered, and they sat and drank together till six in the morning; when George returned to the hotel, washed himself, and thrust his loose things into a trunk, and, almost immediately after he had had breakfast with "the set," he and Sir John, attended by Corney, left town.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DAY IS NAMED.

"JULIANA," said Charles, shortly after Sir John and George had left them, "you are not in your usual spirits, love; are you not well?"

"Yes, dear; quite well," replied Juliana.

"Then why look so sad?"

"Do I look sad? Well, perhaps it is the loss of that dear Sir John whom I *love*—you don't know how I love him."

"Then why don't you marry him?" said Charles, looking as serious as he *could* look.

"Marry him, dear?"

"Aye, we ought to marry those whom we love!"

"Yes, but this is a different sort of love."

"Love is love; you can make neither more nor less of it! If you really love him, why don't you have him? He is perfectly free!—at least, I'm not aware of his having any engagement! Why don't you make up your mind to marry him at once?"

"When I say that I love him," replied Juliana, "I mean precisely what I should were I to say that I loved my own father."

"Your father and mine are two different men. There is a law to prohibit your marriage with the one, but there is no law at all to prevent your marrying the other! Besides, by marrying him, you would at once be Lady Croly! If therefore you love him—and you say I don't know *how* you love him——"

"I have noticed," said Juliana, archly, "that when you have something very serious to say, you always begin with a jest."

"A jest! is it a jest for a lady to say that she loves?—or is it a jest to believe it? What say you Mrs. Wardle?" he added, as the Widow at this moment entered the room, "I know a lady who is deeply in love, but who imagines, when you mention the subject, that you are jesting. Now is love a jest? You know all about it! Do ladies jest when they say that they love, or do gentlemen jest when they say they believe it?"

"Indeed," said the Widow smiling, "you must not appeal to me."

"Aye!" cried Charles, perceiving that she was about to leave the room, "but I wish to appeal to you; and I wish to ask you another serious question:—Is my father disengaged?"

"Disengaged!" echoed the Widow with a look of embarrassment "how is it possible for me to tell?"

"What do you think?"

"I certainly think that he is."

"But do you not absolutely know that he is?"

"Well," replied the Widow, blushing deeply, "I think I may venture to say that I do."

"Very well," resumed Charles, "now I'll tell you why I ask: this lady loves him; she says that I don't know *how* she loves him!—which, I presume, being interpreted, means that she loves him very dearly—and yet, when I strongly recommend her to marry him, she imagines that I am jesting."

"Well," said the Widow, addressing Juliana, with a smile, "Sir John certainly asked me once if I did not wish you were a few years older for his sake."

"Mrs. Wardle!" exclaimed Juliana. "My dear! why you are almost as naughty as Charles."

"Nay, my love, it is a fact! And I remember what followed. He said, 'Why, there's only about thirty years difference! I must think about this, Mrs. Wardle. You have really recommended her to me so strongly that I must think, Mrs. Wardle, I must think!'"

"Now," cried Charles, "what do you think of it now?"

"I think," replied Juliana, smiling, "that you are two very, very naughty people."

"But you don't think that this was said in jest?"

"Of course I do," replied Juliana.

"You are quite right, dear," interposed the Widow; "it was."

"Don't believe it," said Charles, playfully. "Don't believe it for a moment! There is such a thing as jealousy in the world!"

"But you don't believe that dear Mrs. Wardle is jealous?"

"Why, of course I do!—But, oh!" he added, "what an error I have committed! How thoughtless I have been!—how exceedingly stupid, I shall never be forgiven!"

"For what, dear?" enquired Juliana.

"For telling Mrs. Wardle that you really loved my father."

"What *do* you mean, you funny man?" cried the Widow.

"I mean," replied Charles, with an expression of mock gravity.

"that I ought not, on any account, to have mentioned the fact in your presence?"

"Why not?"

"That's right, dear," said Juliana, "question him well! He has teased us, and now we'll retaliate. Now, sir! why not? Answer that question."

"Because," replied Charles—"But don't both attack me at once."

"We'll have no mercy on you, sir! Answer this question: Why ought you not to have mentioned the fact of my loving Sir John in the presence of Mrs. Wardle?"

"Because I ought not to wound her feelings."

"But how came you to imagine that my feelings would in consequence be wounded?" enquired the Widow.

"Aye! said Juliana, "how came you, sir, to *think* of such a thing?"

"Mrs. Wardle herself induced the thought."

"I induced the thought!" cried the Widow.

"Most certainly."

"But how?"

"Aye, sir, how? That's the question!" said Juliana. "How?"

"You press me very closely," said Charles, with a smile, "and I'll tell you, if indeed you really wish me to do so."

"Of course we wish you to do so," returned Juliana. "How came Mrs. Wardle to induce such a thought?"

"By blushing," replied Charles—"deeply blushing when my father—*inadvertently* I believe—called her Adelaide!"

"You are a very tiresome creature," cried the Widow, with assumed playfulness, "and I'll not remain any longer with you."

"Is that a fact, dear?" earnestly enquired Juliana, as the Widow left the room. "Did he really call her Adelaide? And do you think—dear, you know what I mean!—do you think that they will marry?"

"Well, I really *begin* to think so!"

"Oh dear! I'm so delighted! How happy they will be! I'm overjoyed to hear it! I'll run up and give her a thousand kisses, and——"

"Stop, stop!" cried Charles, as he gently restrained her. "You have not yet named the day!"

"The day, dear!" said Juliana, tremulously, "what day do you mean?"

"What! have I been talking to you all this time, without asking you even to name the day?"

"But what day, dear?"

"Why, the day on which we are to be married!—The day," he continued, as he pressed her to his heart, while her drooping head fell upon his bosom—"the day on which she, whom I hold most dear, will be mine for ever!—the day, Juliana—my own!—my own treasure!—on which our mutual happiness will really commence; and I pray to Him in whom we confide, and in whose presence we shall be united, that it may be the sweet harbinger of a long, long life of faith, peace, devotion, and joy!"

"Charles dear!" said Juliana fervently, but faintly, as she nestled

still closer to his warm and manly heart, "you overpower me. But do not conceive that the tears I now shed spring from the most remote feeling of apprehension. No, dear! in you I *may* confide. You have inspired me with faith, and to doubt were heresy: nay, if I could entertain the slightest doubt of *you*—of *your* truth, *your* generosity and honour, it would be so terrible to me that I should go mad! Forgive, dear Charles, the confession of this faith: it is a sweet faith to cherish; and I speak thus undisguisedly because I know your heart, and feel its influence: I feel that my own is so united with it now, that there are no secrets between them."

"Juliana," said Charles, having listened to her with feelings of rapture, "I know that you believe me to be better than I am."

"Indeed, dear——"

"Indeed," said Charles with a smile, having silenced her with a kiss, "I'm not going to listen to any recantation! Continue to cherish the faith you have confessed. It is a beautiful faith: hold it firmly: hold it until I give you *cause* to recant, and that will be when I cease to love you."

"And that," said Juliana, with a look of illimitable confidence—"that will *never* be!"

"Does your faith extend so far?"

"So far! There are no limits to my faith in you."

"Juliana, you fire me with ambition."

"Ambition, dear?"

"Yes; he who is praised by her whom he loves, becomes ambitious of being all for which he is praised, that that praise may not be construed into flattery."

"That is a noble ambition indeed!"

"Very good Still I must say that you are rather severe upon me!—you have set me the task of being pretty nearly perfection!"

"I feel that I could not have set *you* a task more easy."

"You think so because it is a task which you have accomplished!"

"I never had *such* a task set me till now!"

"Well, if you have not acquired it, why it is innate!"

"Can that be construed into flattery, dear?"

"Can the sun be flattered?"

"No, dear! but the moon may be, because to the sun she owes her lustre! You love the moon, dear?"

"I love you!"

"Call me your moon, since to me you are the sun!"

"Indeed I'll do nothing of the sort! The sun and moon, while the world lasts, can never be united! They are distant friends! He just gives her a look at night when it's fine: when it's not, she never sees him! Hence it is that she looks so coldly upon him—sometimes allowing him to see her profile merely—and even when she turns the full face of her beauty, it is to reprove him for not being near. I have no desire to be thus separated from you: you, therefore, shall not be my moon. No! you shall be my star, Juliana!—to me the cynosure—whose brightness and purity shall guide me to happiness here and hereafter! But,"

he added, as she gazed with the air of a devotee—and he was in reality her idol—"we have gone quite away from the point in question!"

"The point in question?" echoed Juliana.

"Aye! Have you led me away from it in order that I might for the present lose sight of that point? I simply asked you to name the day, and we have ever since been talking about other matters!"

"The day, dear—" said Juliana tremulously—"the day you mean—I cannot name."

"Then," said Charles with a playful smile, "who is to name it? Am I? Leave it to me? Perhaps that will be better! Upon my honour I'll not hesitate one moment if you do! Leave it to me at once! You really ought to appreciate the politeness which prompts me to offer to take the responsibility upon myself! Will to-morrow suit you?"

"To-morrow, dear."

"Well the next day then?—or the day after that? Believe me if you will but leave it to me I'll not delay the matter until we are old."

"Dear Charles," said Juliana with a gentle smile, "I must, on this subject, first speak to papa."

"I see! You are not at all disposed to relinquish your prerogative. You'll not allow *me* to name the day although I *could* name one of which I know you would approve."

"What day, dear, is that?"

"The day on which your father is allowed by Mr. Raymond to go to church to return thanks for his recovery."

"Let that be the day!" exclaimed Juliana fervently, as the tears sprang into the eyes of both. "Let that be the day; and may that day be hallowed!"

"Juliana," said Charles, as he endeavoured to conceal his emotion, "you are a good girl—a *good* girl—God bless you!—But," he added, assuming an expression of gaiety, for he clearly saw that Juliana's feelings were intense, "what would you say if my father and Mrs. Wardle were to be married at the same church and on the same day?"

"That would be delightful!" replied Juliana. "It would then be a happy day indeed! But do you really think, dear—do you—absolutely believe—that they will marry?"

"I do—" returned Charles—"I certainly do. The belief has not much foundation I admit: indeed the only foundation it has is the fact of his having addressed her as Adelaide!"

"I know—" said Juliana—"I know a much stronger foundation than that. She is a dear! He must love her: every one must love her. She is so affectionate, so considerate, so good. And then there's nothing to prevent it!—not even an inconvenience!—it wouldn't put her out of the way at all! I should like it to be so dearly! Still she might have confided in me. She might have hinted that such was at least likely to be the case. Did Sir John ever say a word to you, dear, on the subject?"

"Never. Until I heard him inadvertently call her 'Adelaide' I had no idea of anything of the kind being in contemplation."

"But do you not think that it is possible for him to have called her Adelaide without having any idea of marrying her?"

"It is possible, certainly—perfectly possible—but not in my view at all probable. Did I address you as Juliana before I had an idea of marrying you?"

"Certainly not, dear!"

"Would you not have thought it strange if I had done so?"

"Well, I certainly should."

"And so would Mrs. Wardle have thought it strange had nothing of the kind been contemplated by them. But she did not appear to think it strange at all. She certainly blushed, but then it was clear she would not have blushed if I had not been present. Nor did she seem to regard it as being very extraordinary when I mentioned the fact before you. She merely called me a tiresome creature and then with a playful air ran away."

"Well, I shall be indeed delighted if it be so."

"And anything which tends to inspire you with delight must be pleasing to me."

"You are a dear good soul. But you are all kind creatures. I love you all—you and Sir John, and Mrs. Wardle."

"And George?"

"I will love him as the brother of my own dear Charles."

"He appears to be eccentric to those who don't know him, but I believe him to possess a most excellent heart. We were talking on this very subject on Saturday, and he seems to like the idea of the match exceedingly. 'Mrs. Wardle,' said he, 'is a very virtuous person: her piety, moreover, is unquestionable; and I really do not know of one whom I should like as a step-mother so well.' So you see on all hands the match is unobjectionable."

"Well, I do so long to hear all about it. Will you excuse me dear for a time? You cannot think how anxious I am to know all."

"Do you think that you'll be able to ascertain all of her?"

"Oh, dear, yes: I feel sure that I shall."

"Then go and try; and, before you return, ascertain also whether the day which we have, of course conditionally, named, will be consented to by your papa."

Again Juliana blushed; and again he embraced her; and when he had affectionately led her to the door, they embraced each other simultaneously, and parted.

Juliana's first object was still to see the Widow, whom she found sitting pensively in her own room.

"My dear Mrs. Wardle," she exclaimed, as she entered, "I am so very happy to hear what I have heard. I hope that our conjectures are correct?"

"What conjectures, love?" enquired the Widow, with an effort to conceal the sadness which her thoughts had engendered—"what conjectures?"

"Those which have reference to you and Sir John. Now, are they correct? Am I really to have the pleasure of addressing you as Lady

Croly? Oh, I shall be so delighted if I have! Not that I can possibly love you more than I do now; but we shall be such a very happy family; and Charles thinks so too—and so does George."

"George, my love?"

"Yes; he and Charles have been conversing on the subject."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes; and they are both so delighted! George says that he knows of no one on earth whom he should like so well; and I'm sure—"

"Pardon me, my love, for one moment; can you tell me what induced this conversation?"

"Between Charles and George?"

"Yes."

"Well, dear, I cannot exactly say that I know; but perhaps George also heard you addressed by Sir John as Adelaide?"

"No, my dear, never."

"Then perhaps Charles, being so pleased with the thought of your becoming the dear wife of Sir John, named it to George."

"It may be so," returned the Widow; "but does it not, my love, appear to you to be strange that a circumstance so trifling as that of my having been thus addressed by Sir John, who has known me so many years, should have induced the idea of there being anything intended beyond the mere expression of that esteem with which we have ever regarded each other?"

"Well, dear, assuming the circumstance to be slight, it merely shows how slight a thing can inspire belief where there is hope."

"It is true, my love, that hope is one of the germs of belief; but as far as I am concerned, I neither hope to be, nor believe that I can be, on earth happier than I am. Sir John is kind, extremely kind; he always has been kind to me, indeed: he could not be more kind if I were his wife."

"I believe that:—yes, that I believe: but I thought it would be so delightful, my dear, if you and I were to be married at the same church on the same day."

"My love," said the Widow, with an expression of fervour, "I may explain to you, one of these days, why I ought not, in any case, to marry again: but," she added, being anxious to change the subject, "you spoke of marrying at the same church, and on the same day; has the day on which you are to be married been named?"

"Conditionally," replied Juliana: "but, oh! I feel so disappointed; I feel so sorry that our conjectures have proved baseless. I did so hope that all we imagined would be realised. It would have been so pleasant: I should have enjoyed it so much. You cannot think how delighted I should have been. It would then, indeed, have been a happy day."

"I expect, dear, it will be indeed a happy day as it is. But you said that the day had been named conditionally; may I know the conditions?"

"There is but one, and that is dear papa's consent."

"I thought that he had consented?"

No. 8.

"Not to the day, dear. The day which has just been proposed by Charles is that on which Mr. Raymond consents to allow poor papa to go to church to return thanks for his recovery."

"A very proper day," observed the Widow,—*"a very proper day, indeed; and I hope that, for the sake of all concerned, that that day will not be distant. I have reason to believe that it will not be, for Mr. Raymond, who has just left, told me that so great had been the improvement in your dear papa's health during the last few days, that he should give him leave to get up for a short time to-morrow."*

"I am very glad to hear it," exclaimed Juliana; "but the day must not be named absolutely until Sir John returns, seeing that his presence must be held to be indispensable. That is of course understood. Independently of which I shall require time to make my arrangements."

"Of course," rejoined the Widow; "and where do you think of spending the honey-moon, dear?"

"I have not yet given that a thought; but I hope that you will accompany us wherever we may go: I should be, dear, so much at a loss without you."

"I'll consent, my love," said the Widow, with a smile.

"There's a dear!" said Juliana, as she kissed her affectionately. "Now I'll go and speak to papa: but I must again say that I *should* be delighted if Sir John were on the same day to make you Lady Croly."

"And so should I," thought the Widow, as Juliana left the room; "under any other circumstances, so should I.—Not for the mere sake of being called Lady Croly, nor because I believe that I should be more happy then than I am now; but solely because I feel that it would impart additional happiness to him, than whom a man more worthy of being happy, does not breathe. I know that my refusal has given him pain, and I regret it—I regret it exceedingly; but what am I to do? Am I or am I not to violate my vow?—I must not, dare not, do it!"

While the Widow was thus silently engaged in weighing her duty against her inclination, Juliana was delicately explaining to Lejeune that which Charles had so aptly proposed.

"Well, my dear," said Lejeune, as he listened to Juliana attentively, "I have not only no objection, but I feel highly pleased that such a day has been named. I do give my consent to its being on that day—a day on which I trust a new era of happiness will open to us all."

"Be sure that it will, dear papa," said Juliana; "I have not the slightest doubt on the subject myself. We shall be happy to see each other happy. You will be happy—I know that you will—to see me the bride of such a man, while we shall be happy to see you restored. But when, papa, when do you think that Mr. Raymond will consider you sufficiently recovered to venture out?"

"I hope, my love, that it will not be long before I obtain his permission to do so."

"Beg of him, papa, not to allow you to venture out too soon; I will most earnestly do so myself. We are in no haste, papa—we are not in the slightest haste. Let it be a week after his permission has

been obtained. If the consequence of your going should be a relapse, our happiness could not be perfect."

"My dear girl, we will act with all possible caution. We shall in a few days know more than we know now. It will for the present be sufficient for me to say that I consent, and for you to communicate that to Charles. Is he now in the house?"

"He is, pappa."

"Very well; then return to him at once. I shall see him again in the course of the day, and then we can talk the matter over together."

"Dear papa!" cried Juliana, as she fervently embraced him, "I know not how sufficiently to love you. You are so kind, so considerate. Whatever proposition may be made, having a tendency to promote my happiness, you accede to."

"Can you marvel at it, my girl, when your happiness is the only earthly object I have in view?"

"I cannot but marvel that I am so blest;—*every* one is kind to me."

"You deserve the kindness of every one; you deserve it, my child, and I feel that you ever will."

"I ought to be good, and I hope I ever shall be. But, papa," she added, "you say that dear uncle is abroad; can I not write to let him know that I—"

"Leave that to me, my love—leave that to me. I don't at present know his address. When I get about again I shall doubtless ascertain; and if it be possible he shall be with us. Now run away, my love; run away, and tell Charles that which he is probably anxious to hear."

Juliana obeyed, and Lejeune, who imagined that, as Richard had not written to him, something very dreadful had occurred, sank at once into a most painful reverie.

"Well," said Charles, when Juliana had returned to him, "have you been successful?"

"I have been," replied Juliana; "I have; papa has consented."

"I felt that he would."

"But he did it so kindly. It gave him pleasure to hear that such a day had been named."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Charles, "very glad. Then I'll write home to night. He of course could not tell you when that day was likely to be?"

"He could only *hope* that it would be soon. I urged him not to be precipitate. I begged of him not to venture out until he was even more than sufficiently recovered to enable him to do so with safety. I even proposed a week after he had obtained the permission of Mr. Raymond, because we are in no haste, dear, are we?—and it would be such a very dreadful thing if he were to have a relapse, would it not? Besides, when I mentioned my dear uncle Richard——"

"Did you, my love, mention him?" exclaimed Charles, with an expression of anxiety.

"Yes, dear—yes! I hope that I have not done wrong?"

"No, my love, not at all! not at all *wrong*!"

"Why, then, did you start, when I said that I had named him?"

"Did I start! Well, perhaps it was because I imagined that it might have disturbed your papa. You see, my love, he does not *exactly* know where your uncle is, and he feels, of course, naturally anxious to know; as you would naturally feel anxious to know where I was, if I were abroad and you here."

"Aye! but you must not go abroad without me!"

"I promise you that I never will."

"But do you really imagine that I did disturb papa by naming my dear uncle to him?"

"Well, it might have induced him to think, that's all. But, my love, did you succeed with Mrs. Wardle?"

"Oh dear, not at all. I fear that all our conjectures are baseless. She ascribes the fact of Sir John having thus addressed her solely to the esteem which as old friends they have for each other."

"But I never heard him address her thus before."

"That, dear, may probably account for the fact of her having blushed at the time. Certainly, from all that I can gather, it appears that she has made up her mind not to marry again."

"Well," said Charles with a smile, "if it be so there's an end of it at once. I must apologise to her for having mentioned it: or, perhaps, you will be kind enough to do so for me: and if you are disposed for a walk before dinner, while you are dressing I'll write a note home."

Juliana consented, and during her absence Charles hastily wrote to Sir John.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RECONCILIATION.

DURING the first three stages of their journey not a word passed between Sir John and George. They were apparently reading, but not in reality: their thoughts were not fixed upon the books which they held. Each wished the other to speak, but neither felt disposed to begin, until Sir John at length finding that George's taciturnity could not be by silence overcome alluded calmly to the note in which George had pledged his honour that the hundred pounds he had borrowed, he had borrowed for D'Almaine, and then produced the I.O.U. as an irrefragable proof that he was not upon his honour to be believed.

"You wrong me," said George, with a stern expression, "you every way wrong me."

"Wrong you!" exclaimed Sir John.

"Yes!"

"Why, is not this a manifest proof of your falsehood?"

"No! Every word in that note is substantially true. The money was borrowed for D'Almaine."

"What! George, you amaze me. You fire me with indignation."

"And why? Because you cannot *bear* to have the truth from me—because you prefer the adoption of any meanness which may cause the truths I utter to be construed into lies."

"Why was this I.O.U. returned to that man," demanded Sir John, with an expression of anger. "What induced you to return it?"

"My honour."

"Your honour."

"Aye, my honour! I had become responsible for the amount, and felt bound to return it."

"And was it your honour which prompted you to tell me distinctly that you had destroyed it."

"It was."

"What!"

"I was compelled to prevaricate in order that I might not violate my honour. That prevarication I admit: you forced me to prevaricate—but every word in that note is true."

Sir John was astounded, perfectly astounded. He sank back in the carriage, and looked at George with a mingled expression of incredulity and defeat, while George returned that look with an air which might have been by any man mistaken for that of conscious innocence.

"And do you really mean to persist in that statement?" inquired Sir John, after a pause, during which he endeavoured to collect those thoughts which George's boldness had confused.

"Of course," replied George, "well knowing it to be true."

"Then why not explain this before we left town?"

"I explain! I! Would you have listened to any explanation from me? No. You would have treated me as usual, like a dog; for like a dog have I been treated of late, loaded with every species of contumely, suspected, insulted, spurned; and yet the father who has treated me thus has acquired the reputation of being a just man."

"I have, George, endeavoured to be just."

"You have not been just to me. I have received at your hands, neither justice nor mercy. The delinquencies of youth, and the follies of inexperience, are too indelible to be erased from the heart of an angry father. No. I have committed myself, and must therefore be content to be an outcast for ever."

"Would to God," exclaimed Sir John, as tears sprang into his eyes, "that forgetfulness of the past, and kindness for the future, could reclaim you."

"You have not, I fear, the heart to forgive my follies, and hence you cannot have the disposition to treat me kindly."

"I have the disposition to do so, George," cried Sir John, again, bursting into tears. "God knows that I have—God knows that I have."

The carriage at this moment stopped to change horses, and Corney, with all his characteristic alacrity, leaped from the dickey and opened the door.

"Do you please to get out here, Sir John," he inquired.

"I'll get out," said George, and Corney twisted the steps down in.

the twinkling of an eye ; and when George had alighted he twisted them up again, seeing that Sir John was not at all inclined to move.

" Now," thought he, " I can kick him now. I must, for I am not only fit to faint, but havn't got a copper in the universal world. "Please, sir," said he, having faithfully followed George into the Crown, " please lend me a little sixpence ? I'll pay you again—honour."

" What, have you no money !" inquired George.

" I have not had a skurrick, sir, since I was robbed, and, of course, I dursn't draw of Sir John."

" Why did you not remind me, sir, of that disgraceful circumstance before ?"

" Didn't like, sir : couldn't get my heart high enough."

" Whatever you wish for, sir, order," said George ; " and see," he added, as he gave him a sovereign, " see if you can take care of that."

Corney bowed, and withdrew ; and George ordered a bottle of Sherry. He then called for a half-pint decanter, which he filled, and took with a biscuit to Sir John, who appreciated this little attention under the circumstances more highly than he would have done had George presented him with any thing ten thousand times more valuable at any other time.

" George," said he, as he pulled out his purse, containing notes and gold to a considerable amount, " take this and settle with the men."

George took the purse in silence, and returned to his sherry, the whole of which he drank, and that with infinite *gusto*, feeling as he did that by taking that half pint of wine to Sir John : he had made a most " palpable hit," and having settled for every thing liberally, he re-entered the carriage, and the journey was pursued.

" Now," said Corney, on taking his seat, " I'll just light this out-and-out-looking cigar, and then honour myself with a few private thoughts. Now, in the first place," he continued, having accomplished the object he had primarily in view, " why was Sir John in tears when I opened the carriage door ? Do I ask myself the question ? Why was he in tears ? Why, what upon the face of the universal world would cause him to shed tears, except tears of pity, which wasn't the sort of tears he sported then. I say, what upon the face of the universal world could cause *him* to shed tears but that beauty ? Now, I'll answer myself the question plump, and when I say *nothing*, I hit the very middle of the mark. I know what they've been up to—I know it as well as if I had been crammed into one of the carriage pockets. Sir John has been—let me see, what's that word ? Oh—expostriculating very severe about his goings on in town, not about the rats ; no, he promised he wouldn't, and *his* word is as good as a saint's : but he's been expostriculating with him ; and *he*, with the artfulness of Artaxerxes, and he was one of the most artful swells that ever breathed, has been working upon his silly old feelings to such a pitch, that he couldn't stand the racket any longer. Now what does this prove ? What does it *prove* ? Why it proves just this, it proves that fathers are fools, universal jolly out-and-out fools. All a son has to do, if he's ever such a varmant, all he has to do—and that beauty inside can do it stunning—all he has to

do—and I'll say it before a million—is to touch his father's *feelings* : and anger cuts away like blessed chaff before the wind of forbearance, forgiveness, and affection. There never was, since Adam was created, such universal old fools as fathers. But if *I* was the father of that beauty in there, would *I* be such a fool? Not a bit of it. I'd kick him right clean out of nature! I only just wish he had me for a father, I'd weep for him, oh, yes; I'd drop lots of tears; I'd say to him fierce, 'Now look here, it's no use pulling long faces to me—its no use your preaching about piety, or prognostication; you're a scamp—I know you to be a scamp, and a burning disgrace to your sex, therefore cut it!' That's how I'd serve *him*. But Sir John won't do that. No, not he; he'll be touched, and shed tears, and let him have every blessed inducement that is on the face of the universal world that he asks for. And why? Why, because he's a father; and I say it again, and if I had my head chopped off to-morrow, I'd still keep on saying, that fathers are fools—so that's settled. Now, I dessay he thinks he has stopped up my mouth with that sovereign. I dessay he thinks so, because he don't know that it's too late to stop it up now; not that it would have been opened to Sir John, if he had not cross-examined me so cunning; but I was obligated to open to save myself; for although father says to me, 'Corney, know nothin', he also says, 'Corney, take care of number one;' I must then have sacrificed one of the numbers, and as the beauty was number two, I needn't say a single mite more about that. But I'm stunning glad I kicked him; he'd never have stood a drain on the road if I hadn't. And that's the worst of travelling with nobs in general—the beauty I leave quite out of the scale; they want nothing themselves, and think—if they think about it all—that nobody else wants nothing: that's how nobs are known to be nobs on the road. I've known them to travel a hundred miles without having the ghost of a drop. Other individuals enjoy themselves; *they'll* get down at every stage, and think they *ought* to get down, and have suffen; but nobs!—Well, it's just the same when they are at the play. There they sit, hour after hour, without having either a mite or a drain, while others are all the time engaged in cracking nuts, sucking oranges, and drinking gin and beer, and making their blessed lives regularly happy. There's the difference between the two speres—one goes to feast and the other to fast. Now *I* like, when *I'm* on the road to have a drop at every house I come to; *I* can't enjoy myself regular without. I regard a day's travelling as a day's holiday—no cutting up and down stairs: but nobs seem to have no holidays at all: every day seems alike to them. And then comes the question:—Are we, which can and will enjoy ourselves, happier than the nobs? That's the point. But before we settle that, we must first know what happiness is, and where it is to be found. We are all of us after it, that's quite clear,—but then we go such a jolly lot of different ways to catch it: and perhaps it's as well as it is, if not better. Perhaps it's kept secret, in order to distribute the population; for certain it is, that if it were known to be in any particular place, that place would be over-populated in no time.—That's it, I shouldn't wonder. It's because no particular spot should

be over-crowded,—that's about it, no doubt; because now we are tempted to run after happiness eagerly all over the face of the universal world. And yet I think there's a little of it every where. I think there's a little of it here.—I know there is, for I now feel as happy as a prince, and happier than they are inside, I'll warrant. Sir John isn't happy, and as for that beauty, blister *him*!—he *can't* be happy. I wonder, now, whether he ever talks to himself as I do? If he does, I wonder whether he likes it as well. I doubt not. If I had to think his thoughts, I'd rather have no thoughts to think."

Now while Corney was thus entertaining himself—or rather "honouring" himself with his thoughts, George, by virtue of the most specious eloquence, was winning back the confidence and favour of Sir John. It need not here be stated how eloquent he *could* be; nor need it be explained that his subtle plausibility was occasionally irresistible; it will be quite sufficient to record, that before they reached the Hall it was mutually agreed that all that had passed should be buried in oblivion, or, at all events, never alluded to again; and that George was to be treated with the utmost kindness, and to act thenceforward like a man.

Accordingly on their arrival, dinner having been prepared, for Sir John had sent word on the Saturday that they were coming, they went up to their rooms to refresh themselves, and then sat down to dinner together, precisely as if nothing unpleasant had ever occurred.

This somewhat puzzled Corney. He couldn't make it out: he thought it odd—very odd; and when he found that they chatted with unusual gaiety, he privately said to himself,—“This is odder.”

They, however took no notice of Corney's consternation: they continued to eat and to drink, and to chat, until the cloth was removed, when Sir John, to the utter amazement of Corney, said to George, “Now then, my boy! draw up; let's spend a happy evening together.”

If Corney had had any dishes in his hand he must have dropped them; it was therefore most fortunate that he had not. He had nothing but his napkin, and that he twirled and twisted into all sorts of shapes, and stood and stared, and *thought*, until Sir John said, “Cornelius, the wine, my man! bring out the wine!” when, by dint of extraordinary presence of mind, he placed the wine on the table and withdrew.

“Well,” said George, when Corney had retired, “so Charles, I find, has made up his mind to marry?”

“Yes,” replied Sir John; “and I really don't think that he could have chosen a more gentle or a more amiable girl.”

“She's a nice girl,” rejoined George, “a very nice girl; and I most sincerely hope they'll be happy. Of one thing I'm certain, and that is, if she had had the whole world to choose from, she could not have chosen a finer-hearted fellow than Charles.”

“I'm glad to hear you say so,” returned Sir John; “I'm very glad indeed to hear you say so. He is a fine-hearted fellow: he is a man, George—every inch a man.”

“I know it,” said George, who most cleverly concealed his real feelings. “He is a man I know of whom any brother might be proud.

But," he added, with a very peculiar smile, "I understand that that is not the *only* marriage contemplated."

"Eh!" said Sir John, looking up with a curious expression of countenance, "Eh!"

"I understand," repeated George, "that that is not the *only* marriage contemplated—I mean in the family."

"What, do you think of marrying, then?"

"I think of marrying!"

"Why not? Were you to meet with so gentle a creature as Miss Lejeune, I should, without hesitation, recommend you to marry."

"I have not thought of anything of that kind at present. Still, I understand that another marriage is in contemplation."

"In the family? What, do you mean in this family?"

"Yes; I understand that you are going to marry Mrs. Wardle."

"Mrs. Wardle!" exclaimed Sir John, colouring deeply, "I!—Mrs. Wardle!"

"I certainly understood so."

"From whom?"

"From Charles. He told me that he had heard you call her Adelaide, and it is his impression that you are about to be united; and I certainly don't know of one whom I should like as a stepmother better than Mrs. Wardle; for she is a most virtuous and amiable person, and one whom I have always held in very high esteem."

"Well," said Sir John, with a smile of satisfaction, "I am glad that she has your good opinion. She is certainly worthy of it; and I *did* think of repaying her thus for all her—God bless my soul!" he exclaimed, with a start. "Why, what's that?"

"I *will* go in!" cried a voice in the hall. "I'll not wait to be announced. He is here."

George instantly rushed to the door, which he opened, when a man of Herculean build felled him like an ox.

"FREEMAN!" cried Sir John, with an air of command. "Stand off! What means this monstrous outrage?"

"Villain!" groaned Freeman, half-choked with rage, as he stood with clenched fists and grinding teeth over George. "Villain! *heartless* villain!"

"Why is this?" demanded Sir John, fiercely.

"My daughter!" cried Freeman, as he burst into tears, "My daughter!—he has ruined my daughter!"

Sir John started, and trembled violently. He seemed paralysed. At length he said, in broken accents, "Freeman! Freeman! my friend, can this be true?"

"True!" shouted Freeman, with uplifted hands.

"Pray be calm," said Sir John. "My dear Freeman, sit down.—Now pray, pray sit down."

Freeman sat down, and burying his head in his hands, sobbed aloud.

"There—there," continued Sir John, soothingly; "there, now be tranquil—*be* tranquil—and then we'll see what can be done. Good

God!" he exclaimed, as he turned towards George, who was still on the floor, prostrate and motionless—"you have killed him! Oh, my God!" he continued in agony, as he sank on his knees, by the side of his apparently lifeless son: "help!—help!—Cornelius, summon assistance. Help!—help!"

"He *moves*, Sir John!" cried Corney. "See, Sir John, he moves!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed Sir John, and sank senseless on the floor.

The whole of the servants now rushed into the room, and when Corney had turned George over to them, he attended himself to Sir John, while Freeman sat with his face still buried in his hands.

"Some brandy—" said George faintly—"give me some brandy. Some more," he added, having had one glass,— "Why what's all this about? How came I here?"

"Mr. Freeman," said Corney, "struck you a blow on the head."

"What!" cried George, rising with a convulsive effort—"and my father—did he strike him too?"

"No, sir."

"Then how came he thus?"

"He thought you were dead, sir, and fainted."

George shook his head and felt confused. The blow had stunned him but had inflicted no material injury. He rubbed his eyes again and again, and having had some more brandy, became somewhat calm. It was however manifest that he had made up his mind to *something*; still he silently assisted in restoring Sir John to a state of comparative consciousness, and having directed him to be carefully taken to his chamber, and sent one of the grooms for his physician, he cleared the room of the rest of the servants and then locked the door.

"Now," said he, having thrown off his coat and tapped Freeman coolly on the shoulder, "you struck me, like a coward; now stand up like a man!"

Freeman, thus aroused, started up, and sprang at him with all the ferocity of a tiger. The odds were, apparently, fearful against George: he had superior strength, height, and weight against him; but he had been taught that so-called "science," of which Freeman was utterly ignorant.

Swelling with rage—while George was quite cool—Freeman attacked him again and again fiercely; but George parried every blow that was aimed—any one of which must have again stunned him—and, while doing so, struck with so much force and precision, that Freeman became nearly insensible himself.

Not a word passed between them; they made no noise: they fought, like bulldogs, silently: the only sounds which were heard were those produced by George's blows upon the neck and face of Freeman, from whose wounds the blood flowed copiously. Still he kept on—endeavouring in vain to reach George, who struck out with the rapidity of lightning—until seizing the gigantic form of Freeman by the hips, George, with almost superhuman strength, lifted him off his legs and threw him, with so much force, that the massive oaken rafters beneath them trembled!

Corney, who had been an eye-witness of all this—that is, he had witnessed it all through the key-hole—no sooner found that Freeman was unable to conquer George, than he resolved at all hazards on forcing the door, which he did on the instant, and boldly rushed between them.

"Pray, Mr. George," he cried, as Freeman rose, in order to attack George again, "pray don't—do let me beg——"

"Stand aside!" cried George.

"For the sake of his daughter——"

"Stand aside!" repeated George, who seized Corney fiercely by the collar and hurled him—*somewhere!*—even George didn't know where he went to, because he became instantaneously invisible!

"Now," said George, still maintaining an attitude of defence, "perhaps, before we go further, you will tell me why you gave me that cowardly blow?"

"Kill me!" cried Freeman, "*kill me, villain!* You have ruined my daughter—kill *me*;"—when, rushing towards George with the desperation of despair, he fell forward and groaned.

George then rang the bell—which was quite unnecessary, seeing that the servants were already at the door—and when he had given them instructions to attend to Freeman he went up into his room to wash his hands.

The servants approached Freeman and turned him over, but when they saw his face the whole of them shrank back, appalled.

"Gracious!" exclaimed one, "what are we to do with him?"

"Lift up his head," cried another, "he'll be choked."

"Where's Cornelius?" enquired a third; "he's always out of the way when he's wanted."

"Somebody run up stairs," said a fourth, "and ask Mr. George what on earth is to be done."

One of them ran up to George at once, and came down with instructions to give Freeman some brandy and wash his face well with warm water. But, before they were able to act upon these instructions, George himself came down, and Freeman, who had been faint, but not for a moment insensible, soon revived.

Sir John's physician was now announced; and George briefly explained to him what had occurred and then conducted him into Sir John's room, where it was soon ascertained that although the shock had rendered Sir John extremely nervous, nothing serious could be reasonably apprehended.

Now Corney, during the whole of this time, was in a really unpleasant situation. His position, indeed, was one of exceeding difficulty, inasmuch, as when George hurled him aside with so much violence, he sent his head completely through one of the thin panels of the window shutters—glass and all—in which it securely stuck; while the curtains, having immediately closed upon him, rendered him invisible to all in the room.

Now it was seldom that Corney's philosophy deserted him. Having called upon it under even these peculiar circumstances, it promptly

responded to his call, and he began to indulge in a few private thoughts.

"Now," said he, quietly, "here I am; I am neither in nor out, and yet I am both: my head's abroad, and my body's at home. If I push forward I can't get through; if I pull back, I shall cut my throat. Now, what's to be done? Don't be flustered!—be cool. Question is, what's to be done? If I let those who are inside know that I am here, by making a noise with my feet, the chances are that they'll handle me roughly, and glass is very cutting—plate glass especially!—and really this appears to have grown to my neck, for I feel the sharp edges all round. Now, then, *be calm!*—you're in it, and it won't do at all to be dragged out of it. The only chance that my imagination can wind round at present is the chance of some one coming this way outside, and that chance looks hungry and poor. That beauty! blister *him*; don't think a mite about *him* now!—all you have to do at the present critical period of time is to turn the full flood of your intellects to one particular point, and that point is *how* to get out of this collar. Hark!—no!—yes!—as true as I'm alive!—eh?—yes!—bravo!—here comes Borley. Now, be calm.—Peter," he whispered, as Borley drew near; "Peter!"

"God's truth!" exclaimed Borley, as he started back, alarmed, "why who's that?"

"Only me, Peter, Corney, Peter, Corney!"

"Why, what in the name of Nature, do you poke your head out there for?"

"Hush!" said Corney, "Hush! come closer—come close. You are just the very friend I've been waiting to see. I've got my head out, and I can't get it in again: when I get it in, I'll tell you how I got it out. Now get a lantern, there's a good Samaritan. Make no noise; I'm afraid they'll pull me in, and if they *do*, off goes a slice of my head. Now, Peter, be quick:—desert me now, and you lose me for ever."

Peter ran immediately for his lantern, and much to the satisfaction of Corney, in less than two minutes reappeared.

"You *are* in a fix indeed!" cried Peter. "It's well, bor, you held your head sideways, thus'n; if you hadn't, this jagged piece here would have walked quite clean into the juggler vein."

"Never mind, Peter," said Corney. "it didn't. Now take every blessed piece off all round. That's about it." he added, as Peter proceeded to follow his instructions. "There, that's something like. But I can't get in now: are you sure there's no jagged pieces anywhere near?"

"Not a mite," replied Peter.

"Very good. Now go to the room, Peter, there's a good soul, and you'll see how I'm sittiwated there."

Peter accordingly went round at once, and was perfectly astonished on finding nearly the whole of the servants in the room. He proceeded, nevertheless, to the window in question—for he felt that he had one great duty to perform—and having removed that part of the broken

panel which had so effectually wedged Corney in, he released his friend, who seized his hand, and declared himself to be "universally grateful."

This feat had no sooner been accomplished, than George and Sir John's physician entered the room. It was clear that the Doctor had heard all from George, for he immediately went up to Freeman, who was still where George had left him, reclining on a couch, and weeping bitterly.

The servants were then ordered to leave the room, and the Doctor having addressed Freeman, whom he knew well, with the utmost possible kindness, offered to take him home in his carriage.

"I have no home," said the broken-hearted man, as the big tears absolutely gushed from his eyes. "I had a home—a happy home—but she who made it happy has been *polluted* by that villain!"

"Why did you not come in a proper manner, or send for me?" said George, "instead of rushing in like a burglar, and rendering men insensible to begin with?"

"You must make some allowance for his feelings," urged the Doctor.

"I do," replied George, "and should have done when he entered, had I known at the time what induced him to come here. I should have made every possible allowance for his feelings. I do not mean to say that I should quietly have stood *much* knocking about; but I should have endeavoured to avoid him instead of doing what I have done."

"Well," said the Doctor, "it is a sad job altogether; but I hope, nay I believe, that when the first ebullition of feeling shall have subsided, some arrangement may be made to the satisfaction of all concerned. And now my dear sir," he added, turning to Freeman, whose hand he pressed warmly, and with whom he deeply sympathised, "let us go together. I have no *doubt* that when you reflect upon it calmly, the case will not seem so desperate as it appears—and very naturally—to be to you now. Come, my friend—come. Do not suffer your spirits to be *crushed*. Come, and we'll talk the matter over in the carriage."

Freeman, whom the Doctor's soothing words had relieved, rose, and having looked steadily at George for a moment, took the Doctor's proffered arm, and accompanied him to the carriage.

"Dr. Farquar," said Freeman, as they rode through the park, "while kindly endeavouring to raise my spirits, you said not only that you hoped, but that you *believed* that some satisfactory arrangement would be made. Have you, may I ask, any *grounds* for that belief?"

"I have," replied the Doctor. "On the one hand, I have Sir John's honour and fine sense of justice, and on the other I have his son's reputation."

"But I am not a rich man, Dr. Farquar," said Freeman; "I'll give her all I can now, and leave her all I have; but then that is not much when compared with the wealth which *he* will necessarily possess as the heir."

"If he can be induced to marry her, my friend, your money will be no consideration with him ; but," he added, "how came you to allow him to knock you about in that style? A man possessing your immense strength, one would have thought could have crushed a comparatively weak man like that."

"He's not weak, sir, he's as strong as a lion. Besides, I was hot and he was cool. I was just like a child in his hands."

"Well, I should certainly not like to have to deal with such a child; but when the animal is roused in even a comparatively weak man, and he has sufficient judgment to guide his strength, he becomes dangerous. However, you must keep within three or four days; most of those marks will very soon disappear."

They now approached Freeman's house, and as they did so, Jane, who had been in a most intense state of anxiety during her father's absence, flew to the door; but the moment she beheld her father's strangely disfigured face, she uttered a loud scream, and fainted.

Fortunately one of the maids caught her as she was falling; and when she had been borne into the parlour, the Doctor assisted in restoring her to consciousness. He then drew Freeman from the room, and strongly urged him to go immediately to bed, and when he had succeeded in prevailing upon him to do so, he returned to Jane, who was still much alarmed.

"Well," said he, as he pressed her hand gently, "you feel better now?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jane, bursting into tears, "but I fear my poor father has met with some dreadful accident."

"No, no, no, no," replied the doctor, "not at all. I do assure you that nothing of a serious nature has occurred. He will be all right again in a day or two; his bruises are merely superficial."

"Has he been up to the hall, sir?"

"He has."

"Did he meet with this accident there?"

"Yes, but it's a mere bagatelle; a mere trifle: he has nothing but a few slight contusions."

"Sir John, I understand, has returned, sir?"

"Yes, he returned a few hours ago."

"Did my father see Sir John?"

"I believe that he did."

"You know, sir," pursued Jane tremblingly, as the tears again started, "you know, sir—you know—why he saw him."

"My dear young lady—I do—I do."

"Oh, sir, I never can hope to be forgiven!"

"Not hope to be forgiven! Never relinquish hope. All may yet be well. Your father possesses a father's feelings, which I, as a father, can appreciate; but, be patient—*be* patient, and all may yet be well."

"My wickedness now, sir, nearly overpowers me, but when the knowledge of my disgrace becomes public—and public it *must* become, seeing that George *cannot* marry me during Sir John's life time—I shall go mad."

"He cannot marry you during Sir John's life time?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"I know that he cannot—he has told me so."

"Oh!" returned the Doctor, with an expression which denoted great faith in her credulity, "Oh!"

"Were it not for that, sir, my shame might be concealed, although I should never, even then, cease to reproach myself."

"Then he has, of course, promised to marry you?"

"A thousand times; and he will perform his promise."

"I doubt it," thought the Doctor, "I doubt it *now*." But to her he said, "I hope that he will."

"Oh, I am sure of it—perfectly sure. But then, sir, the disgrace I shall have to endure in the interim maddens me."

"Have you——pardon me for——"

"You are sir," said Jane, with painful emotion, "you are sir, not only my poor father's friend, but the friend of Sir John, ask me, therefore, any question you please, and I will answer you as truly as if I had not fallen."

Tears sprang into the Doctor's eyes, and he found it somewhat difficult to conceal them; he did, however, manage to do so at length, and then proceeded to put the question which, in *his* view, had reference, not to love, but to *business* purely.

"I was merely," said he, "about to ask if you had been in the habit of receiving *letters* from Mr. Croly?"

"No, sir, he never *wrote* to me. I have frequently sent notes to him—trifling notes, you understand, sir—which I have written when I have been alone, and thinking of him; but if they contained any little request, he always replied to them in person."

"Then you have no *written* promise of marriage?"

"*Written* promise of marriage?" echoed Jane, whom the question appeared to bewilder, "*Written* promise!" she added, as she stared at the Doctor, diagonally, as if she feared that his meaning should meet her full gaze. "No, sir, no! Why do you ask?"

"Why," replied the Doctor, who felt at the time somewhat confused, "generally when a man is paying his addresses to a lady, notes pass from him to her, in which that promise is, at least, implied."

"He has always taught me to believe," said Jane, "that such things betray a want of confidence. He has indeed established my belief that between hearts like ours no bond can be so potent as that of pure affection—but," she added earnestly, as a slight expression of doubt shaded her singularly beautiful features, "you do not think—you do not believe—that such a document as that which you have named—a written promise—is, or ever *can* be required to bind *him*?"

"Why, what did I say?" returned the Doctor, who could hardly conceal his embarrassment. "What did I say at the very commencement of our conversation?—I said—'*Be* patient, and all may yet be well.'"

"*May* be!" exclaimed Jane, with energy. "In my sense all *must* be well or I perish! But you do not," she added, in a more subdued

tone, although with equal intensity; "you do not—you cannot—believe for one moment that he would ever desert *me*, whom he loves so fondly and for whose society he has so often left the brilliant assemblies at the hall?—*Desert me!*" she continued in all the pride of unbounded confidence. "Never!—never. You cannot *believe* that he ever would?"

"I believe," returned the Doctor—"nay, I now *know* that if he should, he is a villain."

"But he is not a villain, sir!—indeed, he is not. My father to day impetuously called him a villain; but he is not one—he is not, believe me!"

"I hope that he is not."

"But you do not—you do not believe that he is?"

"What reason have I to entertain such a belief? I explained to your father, as we were coming here, that my reasons for thinking that all would end well were the confidence I have in the honour of Sir John, and the value which his son appears to set upon his reputation."

"But *could* Sir John, sir,—if he felt disposed—could he alter those deeds by which George is compelled, during the life of Sir John, to keep single?"

"It is, of course, impossible for me to know of the existence of any such deeds."

"But they are, sir, in existence: George has told me so again and again. Oh! were it not for them we might be married to-morrow! But do you think, sir—of course, I do not know, nor can I indeed be expected to know, the nature of these things—but do you think that Sir John would legally alter them, so as to leave George free to marry?"

"Upon my word—not being a lawyer—I cannot venture to give an opinion on the point; but of this I feel assured, that if your marriage with George depends solely upon Sir John, you are certain shortly to be united."

"Oh! I am overjoyed, sir, to hear you say that! In the midst of my affliction this gives me joy indeed."

"Understand," said the Doctor, "I do not say this with the view of buoying you up with any false hopes!—understand, I said distinctly that if your marriage depends solely upon Sir John——"

"It *does*, sir, depend solely upon him, and upon him alone."

"Very well! If it *be* so, I don't think you need be under any very serious apprehension."

"Do you think, sir,—as I cannot see him,—do you think that if I were to write to Sir John——"

"Have patience: have patience. Do nothing hastily. Something will be decided in a very few days. In the meantime let our conversation be confidential. I shall see Sir John again in the morning, and if I find that I can promote your views, I shall be happy to do so."

"A thousand thanks!" exclaimed Jane, fervently. "Oh, sir, I feel indeed grateful."

Part 3.]

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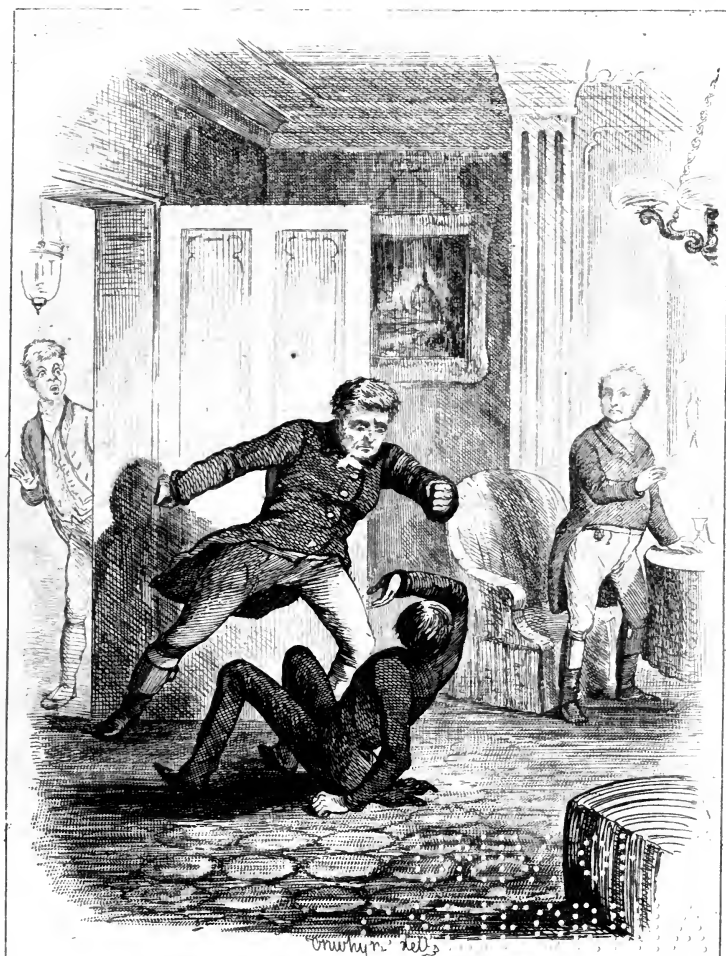
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Corney's portrait framed & glazed !



Freeman's attack on George

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PART I
1945

"Well, well," said the Doctor, rising, "we shall see what can be done. I'll now go up and ascertain how your father is getting on, and then I must take my leave. No, no," he added, as Jane prepared to accompany him, "you need not go with me: I will leave every necessary instruction, but you had better not see him until the morning."

He then went up to Freeman, and having explained to him that Jane conceived that his bruises were the result of an accident, he gave some instructions to one of the servants, and left Jane comparatively happy.

George, immediately after Freeman and the Doctor had left the Hall, sat down as coolly as if nothing of importance had occurred, with the view of trying in his own base mind the effect of a solemn denial of the fact of his having seduced Jane.

"Now," thought he, "how am I to get over this? What if I utterly repudiate the charge? How can it be proved? What evidence—what collateral evidence can be adduced? Her father never knew, never even suspected, that I went to the house with any other object than that of conversing with him. Not a word ever passed in his presence at all calculated to excite any such suspicion; nor can a single letter be produced against me, seeing that I never wrote to her in my life. Her evidence is therefore entirely unsupported. She says that I have seduced her: I say that I have not. Now which will be believed? Whose word will have the greater weight—hers or mine? It must be recollected that she is not a soft, simple-minded girl, but a girl of spirit and intelligence!—a girl, moreover, whose reputation for virtue has been heretofore spotless. But have I not a reputation equally clear? No one here, save the governor, knows anything against me. But will *he* believe her? That's the grand point. Can I induce him to take my word instead of hers? I fear not. But suppose that I am able to do so: what then? Freeman brings his action for seduction, of course—because by my flat denial I shall do away at once with all idea of a compromise—then comes the *exposé*: everything will be publicly explained; her statement on oath will be publicly believed, and I shall be publicly denounced as a villain! Well!—now let us take the other side of the question. I don't attempt to deny it—I admit the fact at once: what then? In the first place Freeman will want me to marry her, which is of course out of the question entirely. Well, he brings his action, and then will be the time to effect a compromise. If I deny it, she will urge her father on, and go through the ordeal with a view to her own partial justification; whereas, if I admit it, and offer to compromise the matter, she will naturally shrink from a public declaration of her shame in order to gain a sum of money, which she might have at once, without the pain which such public declaration must of necessity inflict. This, then, is clearly the course to pursue. I must admit it: I must admit it with every demonstration of deep sorrow. I must then refuse to marry her on the ground of her having yielded—aye, on the ground of her being impure!—and should an action be commenced, of which there cannot be a doubt, a compromise must be privately effected."

Now, while George was thus heartlessly weighing the two courses of action proposed, Corney—who had, before dinner, obtained Sir John's permission to visit his father—was describing to the old man in the most graphic style the scene which had just been enacted at the Hall.

"Well," said Craske, having listened to all attentively, "Well, yow know, Corney bor, all this has nothin' at all to do along a' yow. As they make their beds, so they must lay on em, bor! But didn't he *hut* yow when he sent yar head through?"

"No, not much. But, send I may live, though what strength he must have! Why, he took Mr. Freeman—who weighs twenty stone if he weighs a pound—he took him up in his arms like a baby! Between you and me," he added very mysteriously, "I don't think he's what you may call mortal! I should be sorry to say that any man has dealings with—him down below; but, if *he* doesn't lend him these arts, and this strength, all I can say is, it's very strange to me. There's something about him I *can't* make out. He's just as artful as the Old One himself; and, if I'm not out of my reckoning, he's in some secret way connected with him."

"God knows!" said Craske; "it's hard to judge. At all events, it's nothin' at all to do along of us!—it ain't no business of ourn, and as such, we needn't attend to it. How did you get on in Lonnon?"

"Stunning!" replied Corney. "Talk of life—immortal life! Why you're buried alive down here!—you know nothing."

"Don't we?" said the old man, laying down his pipe, his natural pride being by this observation somewhat wounded. "Now, just look yow here. I know sussen o' these Lonnoners. *I've* seen 'em, and I reckon 'em to be the most ignorantest set that ever walked in shoe leather! What do they know? Nothin'. They don't know larch from fir; they don't know ash from pollard; I doubt if they even know a poplar from a thorn! They don't know a piece o' wheat from a piece o' barley; a piece o' rye from a piece o' oats; a piece o' mangel from a piece o' turnips; or a piece o' mustard from a piece o' tares. Don't tell me about their knowledge! They know nothin' right well. I've tried 'em!—I've tried 'em often when they've been here, and of all the ignoramuses I *ever* come across, I *never* yet come across the likeness o' *them*!"

"Do you know how to make glass?" enquired Corney.

"Glass! What's glass got to do with it?"

"Do you know how to make it?"

"No; how should I know?"

"Then how should they who do make it know about farming?"

"Aye, but you marn't pitch it quite so strong, when speakin' o' them, as to say we know nothin'."

"I meant that down here you know nothing of their style of life; that's what I meant."

"Oh, well!" said the old man, "if that's it, we don't. But I s'pose they're all a parcel o' pickpockets—ain't they?"

"Well," replied Corney, who thought of his watch, "they certainly are not all honest."

"I hear yow can't go up about being robbed. They didn't rob yow, did they?"

"Yes, that they *did*!"

"They did! why what did they rob y'on?"

"Everything I had, except my clothes, and I wonder they didn't take them."

"What! did they knock you down i' th' dark, then?"

"Knock me down! No; they don't do business in that way. It was done in the light."

"Was there many on 'em did it?"

"No; only one."

"What! let *one* do it! Didn't you do nothin' to him?"

"I didn't know it until I found all my pockets empty, and then he was nowhere to be seen."

"Do yow mean to tell me," said Craske, with the most incredulous deliberation, "that any flesh could empty yar pockets in the light about yow knowin' nothin' at all about it?"

"Why, they'll do it and stare you right full in the face!"

"More fool yow to let 'em! But what did you lose?"

"Why, my best silk handkerchief, a matter of seven-and-sixpence, and what's worse than all, your old watch."

"My old watch! What's that gone? Oh, Corney, Corney! Why, I wouldn't have lost it for no sum o' money. That watch I've had six-and-forty year come next Lady. Yar poor old grandfather guv it to *me*, and his father guv it to him; and now, after keepin' store by it all these years, yow've gone and let somebody steal it. *There's* a job! What, did yow pull it out to see what o'clock it was, and have it snatched out o' yar hand?"

"No; *I* didn't pull it out, but they did!"

"What, out of yar fob?"

"Yes."

"And yow not know it?"

"Not till after it was gone!"

"Corney, I doubt yow're tellin' me a falsity. What! take a watch out of a man's fob, and he not know it?"

"I tell you they'll look at you full in the face and do it, and you none the wiser."

"Well, but how *can* they? Do yow mean to say they could get *my* watch out of *my* fob about *my* knowing of it?"

"Yes; they'd have it out in the twinkling of an eye!"

"But I'd defy 'em—I'd defy 'em to do it! It ain't to be done! They might go to work anyhow they liked, and couldn't do it."

"They could," replied Corney.

"But how?" said Craske, rising. "Now, just show me how. Here's the man, and here's the watch. Now show me how they'd take it about my knowledge."

"*I* can't show you how."

"No, nor no other mortal."

"All I know about it is, that it is to be done."

"I can't believe it. It's clear agin natur'; and what's agin natur', is not to be done."

"*They'd* conjure it out somehow."

"I'd lay 'em the whole world they wouldn't, and win. But that's nayther here nor there. The watch is gone, and I'm mortal sorry for it. Didn't yow send the crier round when yow found that yow'd lost it?"

"Send the *crier* round! No."

"Then yow ought to ha' done. I shouldn't ha' minded a shillin' or two! Yow ought by all means to ha' sent round the crier."

"Why, how long do you think it would take him, now, to cry it in every street?—and how much do you think it would cost to have it cried? He couldn't do it in *much* less than a year and a half; and you couldn't give him less than a pound a week for crying; and then he'd want a man, with a directory in his hand, to tick the streets off as he worked them. Send the *crier* round! If he did his work well he'd have to go round and round—for new streets are springing up everywhere daily. Besides, I don't think they have a crier."

"Not a crier! I thought they'd one to every parish."

"Well, suppose they have; and suppose I'd set them all to work at once. I couldn't have given them less than a shilling a piece, and I should say there are not less than a *couple* o' thousand parishes: so you see it wouldn't have done to send the *criers* round. No: the watch is gone, and there's an end of it. I'm sorry it's gone, but it's no use fretting about it now. I've got a pound towards another: the Beauty gave me that on the road."

"He did! What did he give you that for?"

"Because he knew I'd been robbed."

"Then yow told him about it?"

"He was there at the time!—in the very same room! We went to see life, and we *did* see life! But I'll tell you what sort of life it was another time. It's getting late. I must be off."

"That's right, Corney bor: don't be over your time. But recollect and keep a still tongue in yar head. Whatever yow see, or whatever yow hear, or whatever yow know, know nothin'."

Corney then left, and returned to the Hall, where he amused his fellow-servants until bed-time with a graphic and somewhat bombastic description of what he termed "The universal philosophy of London life."

CHAPTER X.

THE MOMENTOUS QUESTION

IN the morning, Dr. Farquar called upon Sir John, whom he found still nervous, but otherwise well, and having earnestly advised him not to suffer the affair immediately in question to excite him, he alluded to the unhappy home of Freeman and Jane.

"Did you go home with him?" enquired Sir John.

"I did," replied the Doctor. "The poor girl fainted the moment she saw his face, and it certainly was singularly disfigured."

"Disfigured! How came it disfigured?"

"Have you not heard?—I perceive that you have not. Why, it appears that when you had left the room, he and George had a battle. George, having been rendered insensible, knew nothing of the cause of Freeman's fierce attack upon him until it was all over; but certain it is they fought desperately together, and Freeman's face was awfully disfigured."

"And George's too?"

"Not at all! He has not a mark. Freeman told me, to my astonishment, that he was in *his* hands like a child."

"I am very, very sorry it occurred."

"You must not, my dear Sir John, blame George for this." He said afterwards that had he known the cause of Freeman's attack, he should so far have respected his feelings as to avoid him."

"Still, I am very sorry for it. You left him, I suppose, almost mad?"

"No; I left him comparatively calm. His bruises he appeared to care but little about; but that his feelings are deeply wounded, you may conceive."

"It's a sad job—a sad job—a very sad job. And how does she bear it?"

"She is almost heartbroken."

"Poor girl! Do you think that she is naturally of a forward or wanton disposition?"

"I am perfectly sure that she is not. I have known her from her infancy, and have had, up to this time, constant opportunities of watching her conduct, and certainly a more amiable girl I never knew."

"Then you think that she is not at heart impure?"

"Had you witnessed the touching fervour with which she said to me last evening, 'Ask me any question, and I will answer you as truly as if I had not fallen,' you would have been quite as satisfied on that point as I am."

"It is that fine—that beautiful girl, is it not? Freeman has but one daughter?"

"He has but one, and she is beautiful indeed!"

"She is rather a lady-like creature?"

"She is. She is, moreover, very intelligent."

"Ah!" returned Sir John, thoughtfully. "Well, I must speak to

George. Such a girl must not be deserted. Does she appear to be fond of him?"

"Her whole soul seems centred in him," replied the Doctor; "he is her idol!"

"Well, then, I must hear what George says. Something must be done. I must hear what he says on the subject, and then you and I can privately talk the matter over again. Will you dine with me to-day?"

"I'll come over in the evening. I shall be engaged till six, perhaps later: I'll come over in the evening."

"Very well. In the interim I'll ascertain what George's feelings on the subject really are."

Dr. Farquar then left, and Sir John shortly afterwards summoned George into the library. George expected this, and had therefore kept at home, with the view of meeting the case calmly and at once; and when he obeyed the summons, it was with an expression which denoted deep sorrow for what had occurred.

"George," said Sir John, in a tranquil tone, "I have no desire to load you with reproaches—"

"I deserve them," interrupted George, solemnly.

"But that is not my object: my object is to converse with you on this very sad affair dispassionately, in order that we may decide upon what's to be done. How *are* we to proceed?"

"I acknowledge my weakness: I acknowledge my error. In a moment of excitement my judgment was lost. I cannot but express the deep sorrow I feel: I cannot but reproach myself heavily."

"But neither sorrow nor reproaches can meet the case now. Something must be *done*. Now what do you propose?"

"I have no proposition to make," replied George. "Could not some arrangement—some compromise be made?"

"What arrangement—what compromise would you suggest?"

"I am not in a position to offer any suggestion: I don't know what Freeman may require."

"Why, George, as a father he will naturally *require* you to marry the girl."

"That is of course entirely out of the question. When I speak of an arrangement, I speak of it in a pecuniary point of view."

"Oh! in a *pecuniary* point of view," returned Sir John, as he looked at George searchingly. "Are you not fond of the girl?"

"Oh!" replied George, with something like a sneer, "she's very well!"

"Very well! But are you not *fond* of her?"

"Not—*particularly*!"

"Have you not induced her to believe that you are?"

"Not that I know of."

"Am I to understand that you don't like the girl, although you have taken the trouble to ruin her?"

"I like her well enough."

"Well enough for what?—well enough to marry her?"

"No, that is out of the question entirely!"

"No, it is *not* entirely out of the question!"

"Why, you'd surely not wish me to marry her, would you?"

"I wish you to act like an honourable man, George, in this as well as all other matters."

"Well, but would you, under the circumstances, sanction such a marriage?"

"Were I satisfied, George, that her mind is still pure—were I fully convinced that her heart is uncorrupted—I would!"

"How can *she* be pure whose virtue is gone? How can she who has sacrificed her chastity be uncorrupted?"

"I speak," replied Sir John, "of her heart and her mind."

"Would you have me marry a wanton?"

"No! But I have yet to know that she is a wanton."

"She who yields up her virtue is lost."

"That's true, in a general sense,—quite true. But under what circumstances, George, did she yield?—what inducements were held out?—what means were employed?—what temptations were offered?"

"On my part, none."

"Very well. Then I have at present no more to say on the subject. If she yielded through wantonness solely, she certainly is not one with whom I can sympathise, or whose cause I would advocate for a moment."

"But if even she had yielded to the strongest temptations—"

"We will not pursue the subject any further now," said Sir John.

"We shall have to revert to it again. I have several calls to make. I have, in the first place, to call on Dr. Briggs, to see how poor Richard Lejeune is getting on."

"I should like to go with you," said George; "I feel anxious to see him."

"We need not both go. You go instead of me. I shall then have more time on my hands."

The horses were ordered, and when Sir John had read a letter he had just received from Charles, he mounted with George, and rode with him through the park; and when George turned off to visit Richard Lejeune, Sir John rode thoughtfully to Freeman's.

As he approached the house, Jane—by whom he was recognised in an instant—flew up to her room in order to avoid being seen; and when he had ascertained that Freeman was at home, he dismounted, and was shown into the parlour, in which he found Freeman, whose countenance was "singularly disfigured" indeed! It could, in fact, be scarcely called a countenance at all; for, while his eyes were black and swollen, and his upper lip hung down to his chin, one side of his face appeared to be laughing all over, and the other particularly glum.

"Freeman," said Sir John, who, under any other circumstances must have laughed, but who then was too serious to smile, "I am very, very sorry to see you thus."

"My own fault," said Freeman as well as he could—and the best

he could do amounted to no more than an almost incomprehensible wobble—"my own fault entirely. I'd no business, Sir John, to come as I did. I'd just discovered it, and also just heard that you'd come home; and—I don't know what possessed me—I was mad!"

"I can understand the feelings which prompted you to come," said Sir John, with an expression of pure sympathy; "but I do not believe that he would have raised his hand against you, had he known the real cause of your coming."

"I don't believe he would," returned Freeman. "No, I don't believe he would."

"I wish, however," pursued Sir John, "that this were all that we had to lament."

"Had he cut me to pieces," cried Freeman, with energy, "beaten me to a mummy—trampled upon me, and rendered me unable to move—I should have cared but little, had he not ruined my child! Such a good girl!—so affectionate, so virtuous, so pure!—he must have had the tongue, as well as the subtlety, of the Serpent!"

"Was he often here?" enquired Sir John.

"Oh, yes! frequently."

"And did you encourage his visits?"

"I did. I felt proud of his society. But as not a single word ever passed in my presence between him and her that could be construed into anything beyond courtesy and respect, I never dreamt that his object was to undermine her virtue."

"Do you think that her virtue has been really undermined?"

"No, Sir John, I do not. She is, in the world's view, destroyed; but I believe that her soul is as pure as ever! The means by which he tempted her I'm unable to conceive. She will not hear a word in disparagement of him: she still believes him to be all that is honourable and just—she still absolutely adores him."

"Would you object to my having a little conversation with her?"

"Object, Sir John! Certainly not. I should feel indeed glad if you would. I'll send her to you."

"I have no desire to disturb *you*."

"You shall converse with her alone, Sir John; I'll leave the room. Yes, you shall converse with her alone."

"Now," thought Sir John, as Freeman withdrew, "now I shall get at the truth. He *is*, as Freeman says, as subtle as the serpent, while his powers of persuasion appear to be, even to the most experienced, irresistible. This poor girl has had, I fear, *some* strong temptation; and, notwithstanding all he says about her wantonness, I feel instinctively prejudiced in her favour. I dread to hear her tale: I dread it, because I feel that it will place him in a most odious light. This is no common case of seduction. *Some* crafty means have been employed, or this sacrifice would never have been made. But why does she not come? She, perhaps, dreads the interview."

He rose and paced the room, and then went to the window; and then slowly paced the room again; and at length he heard a tremulous tap, so gentle that he was not sure that fancy had not lent the sound.

He, however, went to the door and opened it, and there stood Jane, overwhelmed with emotion.

"My poor girl," said he as he took her trembling hand, and led her gently to a chair, "take courage—take courage. I do not come here to reproach; no, no, no! I come here as your friend—as *your* friend, my poor girl! There!—now let us calmly converse about matters which deeply concern us both."

"I feel," said Jane, in tremulous accents—"I feel, Sir John, unworthy to be in your presence. I am a guilty thing, and my spirit is crushed by the weight of my shame."

"Come, come, be calm, my poor girl!" said Sir John, as Jane bowed her head, and sobbed convulsively; "come, let us talk the matter over tranquilly together, in order that we may see what can be done."

"Nothing can be done, Sir John—nothing can be done, unless you remove that barrier. Oh! remove it!" she added, sinking on her knees before him, "remove it, and the blessing of Heaven will rest upon you!"

"What barrier?" enquired Sir John, as he gently raised her; "what barrier, my child?"

"That," replied Jane, "which prohibits our marriage."

"Has he then promised you marriage?"

"Promised—*promised* me marriage!" echoed Jane, with an expression of wonder. "A thousand times!" she added; "and will perform that promise. Were all the world to say that he would not, I should repudiate the judgment of all the world. Nothing can shake my conviction of his truth—nothing can weaken my pure faith in him. It is this unbounded confidence which sustains me. Oh, Sir John! were it not for that, my position would be terrible indeed!"

"You spoke of a barrier, my child," said Sir John. "Now tell me calmly what it is you mean."

"Those deeds, Sir John, connected with the estate, by which George is bound to remain single during your life."

"What!" cried Sir John, with feelings of indignation—"Oh!" he added in a more subdued tone, "then, were it not for these 'deeds' he would marry you at once?"

"He would, Sir John—he would, and thus conceal that disgrace the public knowledge of which will be otherwise inevitable. But why—" she added earnestly, as fresh tears gushed forth—"pardon me, Sir John—pray pardon me—but why—why, Sir John, did you start when I mentioned those deeds?"

"I started, my child," replied Sir John, "partly because I was not at all aware of their existence."

"Not aware of their existence!—*You* not aware of their existence?"

"No; indeed I am not."

"But there *are* such deeds! I know, Sir John, that there are such deeds!"

"How do you know, my child?—How do you know?"

"George told me."

"Well," said Sir John, perceiving that this evidence was held to be conclusive, "I do not say distinctly that there are no such deeds: all I say is, that I have no knowledge at all of them."

"Can they not be altered, Sir John, when they are found? Can they not be legally altered?"

"My child," replied Sir John, "we must see—we must see."

"And if they *can* be legally altered, you will alter them, Sir John—will you not?"

"I will!" replied Sir John emphatically, "I will!"

"I can but *thank* you," said Jane, with touching fervour; "but Heaven will bless you! Oh, Sir John! wicked as I am, I feel reinspired with hope. Your kindness, your goodness, has soothed a wounded spirit. You are indeed the friend of the fallen!"

"My dear," said Sir John, as he took her still trembling hand and pressed it, "all that I can do to promote your happiness, shall be done. I fear that this marriage does not depend solely upon me; but we shall see about that: we shall see—we shall see. I'll speak to George again on the subject, and ascertain what can be done. I said that when I came here, I came as your friend. I will act like a friend to you, my child: I feel now more than ever disposed to do so."

"Ten thousand thanks, Sir John!" cried Jane. "I hope still to be in a position to prove to you how grateful I can be."

"And now," said Sir John, "before I leave, I should like to say one word to your father."

Jane rose on the instant and left the room, and almost immediately afterwards Freeman reappeared.

"Freeman," said Sir John, as he took his hand, "I am satisfied—on one point perfectly satisfied—and it shall not be my fault if all does not end well. Should my son come here, avoid him if you can: at all events, do not speak harshly to him."

"I'll not, Sir John," returned Freeman, "I'll not. Don't you think now, Sir John, that her mind's as pure as ever?"

"I do—I do: on that point I am satisfied. A few days will settle it now; but in the interim, Freeman, *don't* speak harshly to her."

"I can't do that, Sir John," said Freeman. "No, poor girl, I can't do that."

"Very well: very well. All that I *can* do, Freeman, shall be done."

Freeman heartily thanked him again and again; and Jane, who was waiting for him near the outer door, shed tears of gratitude when he approached her and pressed her hand, and told her to hope for the best.

Now, during the time Sir John was thus engaged at Freeman's, George was in the garden attached to the asylum, conversing with Richard Lejeune. Richard had taken quite a fancy to him, and declared, on being introduced by Dr. Briggs, that he was the firmest and most sincere friend he had met with for several centuries.

"I have known him," said he, "I have known him, sir, for ages!—we

were boys together, and used to play with the stars. Don't you remember," he continued, addressing George—"don't you remember how we used to shoot with them? Why, in those days we could send them through the eye of a needle—through the eye of a *needle*, sir, and think nothing of it. But," he added, turning to the Doctor, and at the same time taking George's arm, "you will excuse us. My friend and I are anxious to have some private conversation. You will, I know, excuse us."

The Doctor bowed, and Richard led George to the other end of the garden.

"Now," said he, "I'll tell you what I want: I want to escape from this citadel. I've been here long enough; but I can't effect my escape unaided. The garrison can't hold out long."

"Where is the garrison?" enquired George.

"Concealed just behind here; but the number is very inconsiderable; my men could make a breach, and carry the place in an hour. Now, will you see that this is done?"

"Of course!"

"Let it be done promptly. And then the passport—you can get me one?"

"Certainly. I had better get you one in my own name."

"What name?"

"Croly."

"Croly. Very well. I shall think of that name."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Yes, yes—Johnson—I shall think of that. Let me have it with all possible despatch."

"Very good."

"*These* walls can't stand long!—there's nothing of them! I don't know the thickness exactly, but I should say that they are not more than fifty feet thick!"

"No; I should say myself they are not more than fifty—certainly not more than fifty."

"Very well, then: a four-and-twenty pounder or two would blow them into the air! Let it be done. Take the command yourself, and let it be done in—Hush! here comes the governor."

"I wonder," said George, "that he doesn't appear in uniform!"

"I have been here upwards of sixty years, and never saw him in uniform yet. He dresses thus in private clothes to mark his contempt for all prisoners of war. Here he comes. Now leave me. Be resolute. Adieu!"

George accordingly left him, and rejoined the Doctor.

"I am commissioned," said he, "to bring a field of artillery, in order to storm this castle. You had therefore better be on the look out."

"Does he then contemplate an escape?" enquired the Doctor.

"Yes," replied George; "he thinks that having been here sixty years, he has been here long enough; and as those walls are not more than fifty feet thick, they are to be blown into the air with

few twenty-four pounders. Poor fellow! Do you still think that he will recover?"

"I don't at all despair," replied the Doctor. His case is anything but hopeless. He is in fact much better than he was a few days ago."

They then entered the house, and when the Doctor had given a variety of explanations having reference to the eccentricities of his patient, George left and returned to the Hall.

Sir John had returned home just before him, and when he had listened to George's description of all that he had seen and heard of Richard Lejeune, he said, "Now then, George, let us revert to the subject to which we alluded before we went out. It appears, George, that you have succeeded in winning the affections of that poor girl. You have inspired her with the most unbounded confidence in your honour: you have deeply impressed her with the conviction of your truthfulness, and implanted in her heart a faith in your affection and integrity so firm that, as she says, if all the world were to tell her that you would not perform your promise, she would repudiate the judgment of all the world, and cling to that pure faith still."

"Have you seen her, then?" enquired George earnestly.

"I have. I have but just left her. I went direct to Freeman's when we parted at the lodge, and I certainly feel satisfied now that although she has been tempted—strongly tempted—by you to make the sacrifice she has made, her mind is uncorrupted still, and she is in spirit pure as before."

"You say *strongly* tempted."

"I do, George—I do."

"The temptation was not very strong."

"Don't tell me that, George: don't tell me that. I now know better. You promised her marriage again and again—and I have not the slightest doubt that you made that promise with all your characteristic solemnity: while the only reason you assign to her now for not marrying her at once is, that there exist certain deeds connected with the estate which prohibit your marriage while I am alive."

"Oh!" said George, with an expression of bitterness, "she has told you that, has she?"

"I drew it all from her. Now don't seize the fact of her having told me this as one which can in the slightest degree justify the pursuit of any dishonourable course you may contemplate: she told me, not with a view to your disparagement—for, as Freeman explained, she'll hear nothing in disparagement of you!—she told me because she believed it to be true, and felt naturally anxious to have those deeds altered."

"And you told her, of course, that there were no such deeds."

"No, George; I did not. I would not shake her faith. I would not diminish her confidence in you. I felt that that faith might never be shaken: I felt that that confidence might never be destroyed. I did not undeceive her: she believes in the existence of those deeds still. Truth compelled me to say that I had no knowledge of them; but I told her that if I found I could legally alter them, I would."

"And this of course induced her to believe that if I did not marry her, it would not be your fault."

"Nor will it be my fault, George, if you do not—feeling that you are absolutely bound to do so by every principle of justice and of honour."

"Then you would force me into this marriage?"

"I would advise you, George, not force you. Your own reputation, your own sense of justice, your honour, your feelings, ought to force you—I would merely advise."

"*Merely* advise me to marry a girl whose impurity must shortly become notorious?"

"There is no necessity, George, for its becoming notorious: nor can I conceive it to be otherwise than monstrous for *you* to tax her with impurity. You have made her what she is, and now repudiate her because she is what you have made her. You have gained her confidence, you have won her affections, you have inspired her with faith in your honour and truth; you have acquired an influence over her, the strength of which nothing on earth can surpass, and now—having by virtue of the most refined subtlety—by promises of the most solemn character, and by an affectation of piety and devotion, drawn her into your power and caused her to make the great sacrifice she *has* made—you turn round upon her and call her impure! Is this your manhood?—Is this your honour? Is this your philosophy, or is it your religion, George—is it your religion?"

"I believe," said George, "that there are but few men who have not erred: I believe there are but few who have not been guilty, not only of indiscretion, but of falsehood under circumstances of a similar character. I have erred in this case: I admit that I have erred: but the thought of being united for ever to one who has, under any circumstances, yielded, is repugnant to every feeling of morality, if not to every principle of sound common sense."

"I cannot see why the thought should be repugnant to either. Such a marriage would neither outrage morality nor shock common sense. Your morality I fear, George, is not too refined: nor is your common sense too conspicuous, seeing that common sense is based upon justice and truth. But we'll not pursue this: we'll proceed to weigh calmly and dispassionately all the objections you may have, George, to act in this case like a man. She is a beautiful girl—I call her an exceeding beautiful girl: she is, moreover, highly intelligent, and while her appearance is lady-like in the extreme, her manners are chaste and elegant. That she is amiable and affectionate, you know as well as I do: that she is devoted to you heart and soul, is a fact which is also well known to us both. It is true she is not rich: but the importance of that to you shall be comparatively slight: it is also true that she is not connected with any high families; but those with whom she is connected have always maintained that degree of respectability which has commanded the respect and esteem of all who knew them—"

"No doubt of it!" interrupted George, with impatience. "I have

nothing to say against their respectability; nor have I anything to say against her. I have stated the only objection I have to *marry* her, and that I hold to be sufficient."

"You admit that she is beautiful, amiable, and intelligent: you know that she has an affectionate heart, devoted—*ferently* devoted, to you; yet because you have robbed her—heartlessly robbed her—of that which you now affect to prize above all, you repudiate her and seize upon the fact of your having, by virtue of falsehood, betrayed her, in order to justify that repudiation! Why what a villain—to use the *mildest* term—what a villain you must be! You steal from a casket a priceless gem, and then produce it in order to prove that you have rendered the casket valueless. You cause her to yield that which you affect to consider *her* brightest jewel, and then you adduce the fact to show that morality prompts you to cast her off. But *are* you really such a villain! Reflect, George, reflect! Consider the circumstances under which she yielded; consider that the sacrifice was made to you in the plenitude of faith and confidence. I know the subtle smoothness of your tongue: I know how eloquent you can be: I know how specious you are. The means which you employed were irresistible:—I am convinced of it! You would not have invented those falsehoods gratuitously. You would not have conceived them had you not found that they were absolutely essential to success. Reflect—reflect deeply! Be assured that by promptly pursuing that course to which Honour, Justice, and Nature point, you will gain the applause of all virtuous men; whereas, if a contrary course be pursued, you will be by all denounced as a heartless villain! For my own part—as something must be done, and that soon, I will give you three days to decide. I need not dwell upon the effect which that decision may have; but when you have decided, I shall know how to act."

George was silent. His countenance denoted the existence of fierce passions; but he spake not a word, and Sir John left the room.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FORCED REJECTION.

CORNEY was very nearly caught at the key-hole, for as Sir John rose and left George in silence, he gave no intimation of his approach until he had actually touched the handle of the door; but then, with admirable presence of mind, Corney no sooner received the startling intimation than he flew with surpassing velocity to one of the hall chairs, which he began to polish up with as much energy and care as if he had felt it to be the last chance he should ever have of making that article look at all tidy.

"All right," thought he, as Sir John slowly passed him. "*Nearly*

etched—*very* near—but not exactly quite. And that's the worst of knowing a little: it makes you so *eager* to know more, that it leads you into all sorts of dangers. If I had known nothing at all about this, I shouldn't have cared to know anything about it; but as I know a little, curiosity must come to tell me I ought to know all. And I certainly do know pretty well all now: but I wonder what he'll do; will he marry her or not? He ought; but ought stands for nothing with him. It's a case of heads or tails—heads he will: tails he won't. He don't seem to be so over-and-above sweet upon her, although Sir John says she's so very fond of him. He's an article to be fond of, certainly!—but then there's no accounting for girls: some are foolish and some are wide awake. And I don't know I don't like the wide-awakes best: their society is ever so much more pleasant. They cheat you, it's true; but then they cheat you because they know you like to be cheated. They make you believe they love you, whether they do or not, and nothing can be much more pleasant than that; and what can it matter to you whether they do or don't, if they make you believe they do, and don't deceive you? This is the wide-awakes' game!—instead of simpering, and sighing, and sentimentalizing, they practise the art of pleasing, and the art of pleasing's what I call the subsoil of society. It grows and strengthens and nourishes friendship, which forges the chains and handcuffs of matrimony quicker than all the real love in the universal world. We all like to be pleased—its natural—and we are always pleased with those who make us believe that they are always pleased with us. The wide-awakes know this—they know it stunning!—and therefore they manage to marry away, while those who either love or wait to love remain single. But I wonder what this love is. There's so much talk about it in the universal world that I should like to have a taste just to see what it's like. I should like to be right on dead in love. I'll warrant its nice!—I'll warrant it is, or it wouldn't be half so much thought of. I wonder, now, whether if I were to try hard I could fall in love with one of our girls—say Sarah. I should like to try just for the fun of the thing. But suppose I was to try and make her believe that I loved her, and caused her to love me—right on love me—and then refuse to marry her, what should I be? Be! I should be just as bad as the Beauty. That's been *his* game—I'll warrant that's the game he's been playing—and now he won't have her. But how about the jewel Sir John said he stole from her? How will he get over that? If I were her father and he didn't marry her, I'd have him up for the robbery, and serve him right."

"Tell Tom to saddle the Grey," said George sternly, as he left the room and passed through the hall.

"Dinner, sir," said Corney—"Dinner, sir, 'll be ready in about ten minutes."

"Did I ask you when dinner would be ready? I told you to order the horse."

"Certainly, sir; beg pardon, Sir," returned Corney—"only thought you didn't know it was so near dinner time."

George said no more; but as Corney rushed from the hall, he went

up stairs and opened a bottle of brandy, and having drank all he deemed sufficient for his purpose, he came down gloomily, mounted his horse, and slowly rode over to Freeman's.

As he passed through the gate, Freeman saw him, and left the room in which he had been sitting with Jane, while she, as usual, flew to the door to receive him.

There was, however, something repulsive in his countenance, which caused her heart at once to sink within her. He dismounted and entered the house, and as he did so she tried to grasp his hand, but he avoided her and passed into the room.

"My dearest love!" she exclaimed, with an aspect which denoted the most intense apprehension, "how—how is it that you meet me thus coldly?"

"Sit down," he replied, with a stern expression—"sit down; and I'll tell you how it is. I thought," he continued, when both were seated, and she had her eyes riveted upon him—"I thought that in you I might safely confide: I thought that at least you would never betray me."

"Betray you, dear George! How could I avoid it? When I was charged with it, what could I do?"

"I speak not of that, Madam—"

"Madam!" echoed Jane, whose feelings the application of the term by him appeared to electrify. "Madam—oh, pray!" she added in the most touching tones—"pray, pray do not speak so harshly to me. How—how have I offended?"

"By basely endeavouring to set my father against me!—by insinuating that I wished for his death, in order that I might be free to marry you."

"Great Heaven knows that I am innocent of that!"

"Innocent! Did you not allude to those deeds which I spoke of?"

"I did," replied Jane with comparative firmness, her strength being re-animated by the unjust charge. "I did allude to those deeds—not with the view of setting Sir John against you—not, Heaven knows, with the remotest thought of insinuating any thing so dreadful as that of your wishing for his death; but solely because, having heard you repeatedly wish to Heaven that those deeds were not in existence, I might beg of him earnestly to alter them, if he found it were possible for him to do so."

"The very fact of your alluding to them, under the circumstances, conveyed to him the insinuation that I panted for his death."

"Believe me, dear George, no such terrible thought ever entered into my imagination."

"I know better! And *he* saw your meaning at a glance. You intended to convey that foul insinuation!"

"How am I to convince you that you wrong me? I am innocent of this cruel charge, George;—I am, as I hope to be saved! Believe me, or you'll break my heart. I declare to Him—"

"Have a care," said George, with an expression of solemnity. Remember that you have an immortal soul."

"I do—I do: but were I on my death bed, I would fearlessly declare that I never had any such intention. I never had—indeed I never had! Oh! believe me! Do not treat me cruelly now! You know how very dear you are to me! Could I conceive the thought of injuring *you*, I should be a wretch indeed. But Sir John does not imagine—he cannot imagine—that when I spoke to him I had such a guilty thought."

"Why, then, does he dwell upon it? Answer me that!"

"If he does, it is indeed a misconception—a dreadful misconception."

"Did you ever hear me utter a syllable which could, by any ingenious torturing, be construed into a wish for his death?"

"Never, love; never!—no—no, I never did!"

"Then why throw out that vile insinuation?"

"Indeed, indeed, dear George, you wrong me. I most solemnly declare—"

"I'll not *hear* a declaration based upon falsehood."

"What am I to do?" cried Jane, trembling with apprehension. "You will not," she added again, bursting into tears—"You will not believe me."

"I cannot believe you," replied George sternly; "and as all confidence between us is destroyed—"

"No, no, no—do not say that!" cried Jane. "It is not destroyed: it cannot be destroyed: nothing can shake my confidence in you; nor will you cease to confide in me, when my innocence of this dreadful charge has been proved."

"You deceive yourself, for be assured you shall never again deceive me. My confidence in you is gone for ever!—we therefore part for ever when I leave you now."

"Part for ever!" echoed Jane, looking perfectly bewildered; "Part for ever!—You cannot—impossible—no, you cannot mean—and yet—Part for ever!—I'll not believe it!—no, no, no, no—you are not so unkind, you are not so unjust, you are not so cruel.—I'll *not* believe it!"

"I say again—"

"George! you will drive me mad! Do not repeat those terrible words!—Recall them, dear—dear love, recall them! You did not mean to utter them—did you?—no, you did not—could not—mean to wither all my fondest hopes."

"I am firm—" said George—"immovable!"

"No, no; you will reflect: you will consider how improbable—how utterly impossible—it is for me to have been thus guilty: you will see how *unnatural* it would be for me to say a single word in disparagement of you, to whom I am bound heart and soul, and upon whom all my earthly hopes are fixed. No, no: you will, on reflection, believe me."

"Never again," said George. "Never again."

"Yes, dear; when you have proved me to be innocent."

"Innocent!" cried George, as he rose with an expression of something akin to contempt.

Aye, innocent ! But, George !—dear George !—pray do not leave thus !—I entreat you to hear me !”

“I’ll hear no more !”

“Have confidence in me, dear love ! I never did—I never will betray that confidence.”

“What confide in you when you fear to confide in me !”

have no such fear : I never had : indeed, indeed I never had. In *you* my confidence is unbounded.”

False ! If your confidence in me had been unbounded, you would never have alluded to those deeds.”

“I am sorry—truly sorry that I did so. Notwithstanding I did with the purest intention, I am sorry—very sorry that I did it at all. But you will forgive me : I hope that you will forgive me, and believe that I do not say that which is false, when I say that my confidence in you is unbounded.”

“I’ll not believe it ! How can I believe it ? You have ruined me in my father’s estimation so completely that I cannot remove the impression you have created.”

“Can I—can I remove that unhappy impression ?”

“You might !”

“Then tell me how ! What on earth would I *not* do, dear George, to remove it ! Tell me how it can be done.”

“No,” replied George. “No—I’ll not explain.”

“Why not, dear ?—Pray do !”

“Where confidence is not, impure motives are conceived.”

If you really knew my heart, dear George, you would know that it is full of confidence in you. Nor *will* I imagine that you *can* be actuated by any but the purest motives. Tell me—pray tell me—I implore you to tell me—how this can be done, and more especially as it appears to involve another proof of my confidence.”

“No !—my object will be doubtless misconstrued.”

“It shall not be !—indeed, indeed it shall not.”

“Certainly the removal of that impression from my father’s mind is desirable.”

“It is—it is, indeed.”

“And there is one way in which it can be done.”

“Can I do it ?”

“You might. Mind, I do not ask you to do it ; I merely say that you might. You might nominally break off the match—by either you or me it *must* be done, although it would be perhaps better for you to do it. You might write to me and state that you reject me, and that all communication between us must be at an end. This would remove at once the impression you have created. Were you to do this—but folly !—I talk like a child : you have not sufficient confidence in my honour to do it.”

“Have I *not* ? You shall see. I am glad that you have thus put my faith to the test. It shall be done ! You shall know that my confidence in you *is* unbounded. Dictate—” she added on opening her desk,—“Dictate to me that which you would

have me write, and—no matter what it be—it shall instantly be written.”

“I do not desire to dictate to you.”

“But you know, dear, better—much better than I know—what will have the desired effect.”

“Address me as ‘Sir,’ and then coldly reject me.”

Jane, intent only on removing the impression which it appeared had been created in the mind of Sir John, wrote “Sir—Circumstances of recent occurrence have induced me to write for the purpose of stating that I reject you.”

“Will that be sufficient, dear George?” she enquired.

“Anything will do,” said George, carelessly. “Still, you may as well add, in order to make the note longer, that all correspondence between us must cease.”

This was added, and the note ran thus:—

“SIR,

“Circumstances of recent occurrence have induced me to write for the purpose of stating that I reject you, and that all correspondence between us must cease.

“I remain,

“Dear George,

“Your own and ever affectionate,

“JANE.”

“What’s this?” said George, having read the note. “I remain, dear George, your own and ever affectionate—Nonsense! That will not do.”

“I have always thus subscribed myself.”

“I know that you have; but don’t you see that this contradicts the body of the note.”

“I see—yes, I see now. Then what shall I put?”

“Respectfully yours, Jane Freeman.”

The note was re-written, and submitted again to George, who said, “This will do—seal it, and direct it to me, and then send it up to the Hall.”

Jane obeyed him. The note was directed and sealed, and one of the men was immediately despatched.

“Then you thought,” said Jane, with a tearful smile, “that my confidence in you was not unbounded?”

“I did,” replied George. “I did.”

“Why, you have acquired so much influence over me, love, that were you to wish me to stand as a target to prove my confidence in you, I would do it.”

“Well, we shall see. For the present I must leave you.”

“But this, dear, has been such a terrible quarrel. I really cannot part with you yet. I began to fear that I had lost you for ever, and yet I would not believe that you were in earnest. You did, however, speak to me harshly—very harshly—you almost broke my heart. But you did not really mean to speak cruelly to me. No, no; I feel sure that you did not mean it. There,” she added, as she smiled, and tried

to check her tears, but could not, "It's all over now—yes, it's all over now. It's too terrible to reflect upon; we'll think no more of it. But must you really leave me so soon?"

"Yes," replied George, "I have not yet dined."

"When shall I again see you, love?"

"When I find that that impression has been removed."

"Heaven grant, then, that that may be soon! Must you go?" she added, as he moved towards the door. "Well, well; I will not detain you, love, now. God bless you! God bless you! You leave me comparatively happy."

George coldly permitted her to embrace him, and left; and when she had watched him until he had become lost to view, she sank on the couch and wept bitterly. She felt humiliated, degraded, enslaved; and she was, indeed, at the mercy of one who was merciless. Instead of having influence over him, she had yielded all, and become a suppliant. Had she not been prevailed upon thus to yield, she would have assumed the true dignity of her sex. She would not only have felt herself insulted; she would have resented the insult, and that with becoming spirit: but, in her position, she was—as those who are situated like her ever are and ever will be—powerless.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ADVICE.

ON his return to the Hall, George found that Sir John—having been through the ceremony of dining alone—had just been joined by Dr. Farquar. Jane's note had arrived before him, and so had a small parcel containing Corney's watch, which D'Almaine, by a well-known process, had recovered.

"You remember, sir," said he, addressing Corney, who shortly afterwards entered the room in which he was sitting, with a message from Dr. Farquar, to the effect that he should be happy to take a glass of wine with him, "You remember, sir, being in that disreputable house in which you were robbed?"

"I have reason to remember it, sir," replied Corney; "I shall never forget it to the day of my death. I shall never have another watch like that."

"What kind of watch was it?"

"A beauty, sir!—right on a beauty! replied Corney, who, having from the mine of his imagination raised the idea that George intended to make him a present of another, felt bound in strict justice to himself to hold the lost one in very high esteem—"I never see such a watch, sir, before or since, and never shall see such another. It was—I don't know how many hundred years old!—works inside, sir, going like life, and a couple of cases of silver and gold, and hands and face, sir,—stunning!"

"I have a watch here," said George, "but it does not at all correspond with your description. The one I have is a dirty old tortoise-shell affair, battered about in all directions, and not worth a crown! Do you know the maker's name?"

"Swiggles, sir, Swiggles: Swiggles, Maker, six thousand six hundred and sixty six, London. I recollect the number because of the four sixes."

George produced the watch with the view of ascertaining whether the name and number corresponded; and the moment Corney fixed his eyes upon it, he was struck with the most intense amazement.

"Why, that's the very watch!"—he exclaimed, with a stare which denoted the existence of a feeling that some awfully satanic mystery was attached to it,—“As true as I'm alive, the very one!”

"Well, but where are the gold and silver cases?" enquired George.

"You'll find it all shiny inside," replied Corney.

"Shiny inside! well, it's shiny enough and the maker's name is Swiggles. Are you *sure*, sir, that this is the watch that you lost?"

"Quite, sir; quite! I should know it from a million."

"Very well: then there it is."

"I'm very much obliged to you indeed sir, and return you many thanks. But may I be so bold, sir, as to ask how you got it?"

"Ask no questions," replied George sternly, as he rose to leave the room and left the watch on the table. "Be satisfied with having it restored."

Well! it is extremely painful to tax a man with ingratitude, but it certainly cannot with strict truth be stated that Corney was satisfied at all! He was, on the contrary, exceedingly dissatisfied, and would almost have given the watch to have had that which he held to be a black looking mystery solved.

"How did he get it?" he enquired of himself. "How, in the name of all the spirits afloat, did he conjure it down *here*? He must—I'll say it again and again, and I'll keep on saying it—he must have some friendly connection with the Old One! I have heard of men selling their souls: I've seen it done!—I saw it at the play, and whatever they wanted they had but to wish for, and there it was ready cut and dried. Now, it's hard to say—very hard to say—that a man has sold his soul: it isn't affectionate, it isn't charitable, it isn't pathetic, it isn't the thing; but if this isn't a sell—a dead and universal sell—all I can say is that it looks dark and like it. Here is the watch—the real identical watch that ungrateful rhinoceros robbed me of in London—mark! in London, more than seventy mile away!—here it is, and who but the Old One could have brought it? No mortal knew of the robbery until the thief was gone!—no flesh knew where he went to nor where he could be found, nor could any living soul in London tell that this very watch belonged to me. Now look at that!—just look at that!—*look* at it and then see what it amounts to. Didn't the Old One know the watch? Didn't he know the thief that stole it? and didn't he know it belonged to me? Very well, then! George—

wished to have it back—he *wished* to have it back—he *wished*!—and back it came! Now you know this looks black—particularly black! *I* might have wished till all was blue before he'd have brought it back for *me*. But George wished, and back it came like life. Why, isn't this exactly the same as when the man sold his soul at the play? Didn't *he* wish?—and didn't he have what he wished for?—and isn't this the same case exact? I can't *smell* any thing like brimstone about it," he continued as he bent towards it cautiously, for he had not yet inspired sufficient courage to touch it. "It smells of *smoke*—but that may be London smoke. I don't like the look of it! I don't like to handle it! If it has passed through the Old One's hands it may perhaps get me in his power! I should like to wind it up just to see how it goes! He may have been playing himself with the works! I should *like* to wind it up!—But then if he should be in it! Send I may live, wouldn't that be a treat! But in it!—how can he be in it! And yet I've heard say he's in a smaller thing than that. Who knows? He *may* be in it! He may at this present time be hid among the works. He can twist himself into any universal thing upon earth that swell can! Nothing's too little for him!—any where *he* can walk in!—although it's a rum thing to think of his being everywhere at once! Well, then,—now stop a bit—let's look at the thing philosophical. He's everywhere at once. Very well. Everywhere. Well then, if he's everywhere, he's in the watch, it's true; but so he would have been had it not passed through his hands. What then have I to fear? I never murdered nobody!—I never robbed nobody!—I never did nobody no harm, nor I don't owe nobody twopence. Why, then, should I fear? If he's in among the works I'll wind him up among the works. But stop—don't be too fast—he'll not stand much nonsense!—he's not the sort of swell to be trifled with, mind you! But what's he got to do along o' me? *I* have not sold myself to him! The watch is mine! I'll wind it up and put it in my pocket. But—*should* he be in it—"

The bell rang—it rang with a somewhat startling effect—and Corney, whose soul was absorbed in the sound, became so oblivious of his philosophy, that, on the impulse of the moment, he seized the watch, and instinctively rushed from the room.

It must not, however, be imagined that the bell rang with violence because it had a startling effect upon Corney. It did not ring with violence; it rang, in fact, somewhat more gently than usual. Still, if it be considered that he was at the time in the depths of his own metaphysics, the fact of his having started when summoned from those depths by the bell, can excite no surprise.

"Cornelius," said Sir John, as Corney entered the drawing-room, "who was the bearer of that note? Who brought it?"

"Note, Sir John? The note for Mr. George?"

"Yes; whom was it left by?"

"Jerry, Sir John, one of Mr. Freeman's men."

"Very good," returned Sir John, "that will do; that's all I want you for." And Corney at once bowed and withdrew.

"Well," said Dr. Farquar, who had been earnestly engaged in portraying the amiable characteristics of Jane, and whose eulogies had been stopped by the production of her note, "as that is the case, why there, of course, as far as it goes, is an end of the matter."

"But is it not strange," observed Sir John, addressing the Doctor, "that she who appeared to be this morning all constancy, who seemed so devotedly attached to him that nothing on earth—as she fervently declared—could shake her faith in his affection and honour, should so suddenly turn round and discard him?"

"It is," replied the Doctor, "it is strange, indeed. I can't at all understand it."

"We hear," pursued Sir John, "of the fickleness of women; but this surpasses all, if this note were written voluntarily."

"I don't think," said the Doctor, "that Freeman could have prompted her to write, under the circumstances, such a note as that. Have you seen her to-day?" he added, turning to George.

"Yes," replied George, "and the fact of our having had a few angry words may have induced her to write to me thus."

"Oh!" said Sir John, "you *have* seen her, and you had a few words together—angry words. Well, I'll not inquire what you quarrelled about; but I think that situated as she is now, words of kindness might have been substituted for those of anger."

"I can tell you why we quarrelled."

"I do not wish to hear."

"It was because I found her utterly unworthy of confidence."

Sir John, who was anxious not to expose George before Dr. Farquar, merely observed, that he knew that she had the utmost confidence in him; and the subject dropped.

Sir John was, however, by no means convinced that that note had been written voluntarily. He felt sure that its tone was ascribable either to George's brutality or Freeman's disgust; and therefore, having the most implicit faith in Jane's constancy, and no faith at all in the honour of George, he resolved on ascertaining, if possible, what really induced her to write it.

He accordingly, immediately after breakfast the following morning, rode over and called upon Jane; and when she had received him with unaffected pleasure, he led her to a seat, and said, with a smile of great significance, "So you have discarded George, I find—repudiated him utterly."

Jane was silent.

"Your decision was somewhat sudden, my child, was it not?"

Jane held down her head, and was silent still.

"He treated you harshly, I presume—very harshly. But what was this desperate quarrel about?"

"Oh!" said Jane, artlessly, "it's all over now. We made it all up before we parted."

"Oh!" cried Sir John, with an expression of satisfaction, "you made it all up before you parted! Well, that's right! It was but a lovers' quarrel, then, after all?"

"Nothing more," replied Jane.

"Well, well! If you made it up before you parted, why, so much the better, my child; but, as you made it up before you parted, what induced you, when you had parted, to send him that note?"

Jane was again silent, and felt much embarrassed.

"Was that note," enquired Sir John, "written by you?"

"Yes, Sir John," replied Jane, tremulously—"yes."

"But, as the quarrel was at an end before he left you, how came you to send it?"

"I sent it," said Jane, in a state of confusion, "I certainly sent it."

"Then, of course, you wish to see him no more!"

"Heaven forbid," she exclaimed with fervour, "that I should ever entertain such a thought!"

"You have stated that all correspondence must cease."

"I am aware, Sir John—yes, I am aware it is thus—stated."

"Then you did not really mean it?"

"No, Sir John, no!—that is—no!"

"Then what could have induced you to write to that effect?"

"I scarcely knew what I was about."

"Well, well!" returned Sir John, soothingly, "I believe it. I don't think you really did know what you were about: no, I don't think you did. But I have, my dear, to ask you one question, which I hope you will answer ingenuously. Do not fear me; I have your happiness nearer at heart than you imagine. I am no enemy of yours, my child."

"I am sure of it!—Oh, I feel satisfied of that!"

"Well, then, was this note voluntarily written?"

Jane was again silent, and hung down her head, and felt more than ever confused.

"I mean, my dear, did any one force you to write it?"

"No, Sir John, no—no one *forced* me."

"Very well: *very* good: I'm very glad to hear it. Where was it written?"

"Here, Sir John: in this room."

"Oh! in this room! Aye! Who was in the room when you wrote it?"

Jane burst into tears, and Sir John waived the point for a moment, and endeavoured to soothe her; and at length said, "Was this note written in your usual hand?"

"I felt somewhat confused at the time," replied Jane.

"I see; you couldn't write so well as you usually write, *because* you felt confused."

"I wrote it while in a state of agitation."

"And what caused you to be agitated?"

"I never can write so well as when I am alone."

"Of course not, my dear; nor can I. Did he notice the hand at the time?"

"Who, Sir John?"

"There was no one else present, I presume? Your father was out, was he not?"

"No, Sir John: he was up stairs."

"Oh, he was up stairs! Well, but didn't George notice the hand?"

"He said nothing about it to me. But is there anything particular about the writing?"

"No, nothing particular! It merely looks as if you were confused at the time!"

"I was confused—I was confused."

"But how came you to write it in the presence of George?"

"Did I say that I wrote it in his presence?"

"Why, my dear, but you admitted as much! But, come, now let us understand each other perfectly. It *was* written in his presence, was it not?"

"How am I to act?" cried Jane, tremulously, as the tears again gushed from her eyes. "I have no wish, Sir John, to conceal anything from you; and yet, if I tell you all he will be angry. What am I to do?"

"My dear girl," returned Sir John, calmly, "my object in asking these questions is chiefly to ascertain how *I* am to act, and what *I* am to do; and I pledge you my honour that what you say to me now shall remain, as far as I am concerned, unknown to him. Something, in a day or two now must be done; but, although I can see pretty clearly why that note was written—although I know pretty well that he urged you to write it—I am anxious to proceed on sure grounds."

"It was certainly written at his suggestion," said Jane.

"Exactly. It was not only written at his suggestion, but he was present when you wrote it."

"He was."

"Of course, and dictated the terms. But what was his object—his ostensible object? What did he state his object to be?"

"Merely to relieve your mind," replied Jane.

"To relieve *my* mind?"

"He thought that that note might remove an impression which he imagined that I had created."

"What impression did he mean?"

"He feared that when I unfortunately mentioned those deeds, that I had induced you to fancy that he wished for your death!"

"Oh!—in order that he might then be quite free to marry you?"

"Exactly. But I am sure I had no intention of creating any such impression—I had no thought of anything so dreadful."

"No such impression was made."

"Believe me, Sir John, if I caused you for one moment to imagine that he was capable of entertaining such a thought—"

"My dear girl, you did nothing of the kind."

"I am, indeed, glad to hear you say so. He feared that I had; and I began to be apprehensive that I might inadvertently have said something calculated to induce the idea, although, Heaven knows, I had no such bad intention."

"Then he accused you of having the *intention*?"

"Why," replied Jane, "he was alarmed: he was afraid that you

might imagine something of the kind, and therefore he wished me to write that note."

"I see,"—said Sir John, with a thoughtful expression,—“I see. He was afraid that his anxiety to marry you might be construed into a wish for my death."

"Precisely," replied Jane, who began to feel as if *that* difficulty had been surmounted,—“Precisely. But I am quite sure that no such thought as that ever entered into his imagination. He is too kind, too good, too affectionate, to entertain a feeling so unnatural."

"Certainly," returned Sir John calmly; “it *would* be unnatural for a son to wish for his father's death—it would be, under almost any circumstances, unnatural—but I am not in the slightest degree apprehensive that his anxiety to marry you has engendered any such wish! Nor, indeed, is my death at all necessary to your marriage. He can marry you if he thinks proper, even to-morrow!"

"And those deeds, Sir John?"

"There are no deeds connected with the estate which amount to a prohibition."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Jane. "Why, what a dreadful misconception then he has been labouring under!"

"There is nothing to prohibit your marriage *now*!"

"Then you have removed the prohibition! I feel that you have! Oh!" she continued, as she shed tears of gratitude, "your kindness overpowers *me*; but Heaven will bless you! Is there nothing to prevent it?—did you say nothing?"

"He is just as much at liberty to marry you now as he would be if I were in the grave. He has my consent, and whenever he feels disposed to marry you he can do so."

"Sir John," exclaimed Jane with an expression of rapture, "you have inspired me with new life, and hope, and joy!"

"I said," observed Sir John with marked emphasis, "that whenever he feels *disposed* to marry you he can do so."

"Disposed!" echoed Jane, with a look of intensity. "Disposed, Sir John? *Disposed?*"

"Aye! I say that he can make you his wife whenever he feels disposed!"

"But you do not conceive that he has—or ever had—the slightest indisposition to do so?"

"Nay! you ought on that subject to know his feelings best."

"Well I have not—I cannot have the slightest conception that he will hesitate one moment when he knows that he is free."

"Very good!" returned Sir John. "Then all you have to do is to bring him to the test."

"The test, Sir John! his sincerity, his constancy, and truth surely cannot require to be tested? I have the utmost faith in his affection!—if I had not, I should indeed be wretched!—And yet you seem to doubt!"

"I merely said, bring him to the test. He is free, quite free, to marry you now. There is nothing to prohibit the marriage; nothing

on earth that I am aware of to prevent it. I therefore say, bring him to the test."

"But how," said Jane, whom Sir John's plain advice and apparent incredulity had confused, "how is the test of which you speak to be applied?"

"He promised that he would marry you when he became free. Very well. Tell him that he is perfectly free to do so *now*, and then you'll hear what he says."

"But will he not be angry?"

"Why should he be angry? If he be sincere he'll not be angry. He will, on the contrary, be pleased to find that every obstacle to his marriage has been removed."

"But may I say that you told me every obstacle had been removed?"

"Certainly. You can say that you have seen me, and, that having alluded to our former conversation, I stated that he was now free."

"I know not," said Jane, whose confidence had thus been somewhat shaken, "I know not, Sir John, how to thank you; but believe me, I feel indeed grateful for the interest you take in my most unhappy case."

"If he be sincere, my girl, all will yet be well."

"But do you—can you—doubt his sincerity?"

"I like to see sincerity proved, my dear: there is then no room for doubt. But do not be dispirited. Have courage. Relinquish neither faith nor hope. You have it now in your power to bring him to the test, and therefore take my advice and gently do so."

"I will," returned Jane, "I will take your advice."

"Be calm," added Sir John, as he rose to leave the room. "Be firm, but tranquil."

Jane, who knew not then what to think, and whose embarrassment was painful in the extreme, accompanied him with trembling steps to the door, where he pressed her hand affectionately, and left her.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TEST.

SIR JOHN'S object in throwing a doubt on George's sincerity was of course to prepare Jane for that which she conceived to be the worst—to render less sudden her descent from pure faith in his truth to conviction of his faithlessness—to break her *fall* from hope to despair.

He knew what confidence she reposed in George—how ardently she loved him, and how firmly she held her belief in his truth; and fearing that the shock, if it came unexpectedly, might prove, under the circumstances, fatal, he thought it wise to create in her mind a doubt, that she might weigh it and dwell upon it and inure herself to it while she still retained hope, before the blow—which he now thought inevitable—came to blast that hope for ever.

Nor was this doubt created in vain; for Jane, during the whole of that day, while still clinging to hope, accustomed her mind to suspicion.

"And is it come to this!" she exclaimed bitterly, while dwelling upon each conflicting thought as it arose. "*Is it come to this?*—to doubt where I reposed the most unlimited confidence—to suspect where I cannot cease to love? I had no conception that he was ever imagined, even by comparative strangers, to be capable of an act of dishonour; and yet his father suspects him!—his father, who ought to know him better than all the world besides! I thought that he had an almost universal reputation for piety, sincerity, and amiability; and yet his father—his own dear father—has caused me to doubt! But I'll cease to doubt: I'll have confidence still. I'll doubt no more!—I'll know!—I'll *know* if he be that which I hope he is, but which I have been thus led to fear he is not."

She wrote to him and he treated the note with contempt. She wrote to him again and her note was returned! A third time she wrote in the most touching strain—imploring him for mercy's sake to come to her—and to that note she received the following answer:—

'MISS FREEMAN,

"I must no longer be annoyed, and your communications are an annoyance to me, seeing that they remind me of those unguarded moments in which you betrayed me into sin.

"Repent, woman! Have a contrite heart. Repent!—for true penitence will not be despised. Repent sincerely. Crave mercy from the Fountain of all Mercy. Seek to be forgiven. Repent and be saved!

"I am,

"Your well wisher,

"GEORGE CROLY."

Jane—whom the breathless perusal of this note had stunned—stood and stared like a lunatic. She felt that all her fond hopes were blasted—that she had been cruelly deceived—that she had confided in a villain—she felt all this and yet shed not a tear! She could not weep—her indignation sustained her—she stood pale and motionless as a statue!

"Jane, dear," said Freeman, who had been watching her anxiously;

"Jane—what is that?"

She instinctively gave him the note as she stood, and then became motionless again until he had read it.

"Villain!" cried Freeman, having glanced at the first paragraph. "Monstrous—thrice accursed villain!" he added, seizing the poker with the view of thrusting the note into the fire.

"No, no!" exclaimed Jane, as she rushed towards him, "Father!—No! Let it—for Heaven's sake, let it be preserved! Dear father," she added, as she fell upon his neck, and gave vent to tears of agony, "do not—pray do not destroy it."

"Viper!" cried Freeman, whose rage was intense, "base cowardly viper! Then *he* was betrayed!—you betrayed *him*!—the wretch!"

"Dear father," said Jane, "let us take Sir John's advice, and be calm."

"Calm! Who can be calm?"

"We can at the same time be firm, dear father."

"I will be firm! The *unmanly* scoundrel!—Yes, I *will* be firm! He shall pay dearly for this! I'll denounce him to the world! The whole world shall know what a villain he is!"

"And what a wretched creature I am!" added Jane. "Aye! and what a wretched creature I am! But, dear father, let us read that note again, and then we shall know better how to proceed."

"I have not read it all," replied Freeman; "I have only read the first part, in which he says that you betrayed *him*!"

"Dear father, I hope that you do not suspect—"

"No, no, my girl—no, no!—that's out of the question."

"But, if I could be so wicked—"

"If you say another word upon that point, Jane, I'll hurl the brutal note into the flames!"

"Then, I'll not," replied Jane,—“I'll not. Read that which you have not yet read, and then let me read it again.”

Freeman again looked at the note; but, short as it was, he could not read it all. He had not sufficient patience to read it, and therefore give it to Jane, with an expression of contempt.

"Well," said Jane, calmly, having perused it again with care, and dwelt thoughtfully upon every sentence it contained. "You perceive that I can read it without any strong emotion! And why? Because, dear father, I know the falsehood, the injustice, and the cruelty by which it is characterised. And yet," she added, as a thought on the instant struck her, "I'll not believe that when he wrote it he was sane."

"Not what!" cried Freeman.

"Not sane, dear father. He must have written it while in a state of enthusiasm. His mind must have been under the influence of some delusion. Some feverish excitement must have overturned his reason. His brain was affected. It must have been. I'll not believe that, had he been in his right senses, he would have written to me thus. I'll not believe it! He who has breathed to me the sweetest affection—whose claims to my love have been based upon the purest piety—he by whom I have been taught with surpassing tenderness to look up to, to idolize, to revere!—*he* write to me in this strain, and yet not be *mad*!—I'll not believe it!"

"My dear Jane!" said Freeman, "be no longer deceived. He is a villain!"

"No, no, dear father—at least, do not yet condemn him."

"I say that he is a villain! That note was written either to drive you mad or to break your heart—he cared not which."

"But does it look like the note of a sane man?"

"It looks like the note of a dastardly hypocrite, anxious to hide his villany, and to increase your shame. *You* were the seducer, forsooth!—you betrayed *him*!—and now he exhorts you to repentance!"

"It is that very style," returned Jane, "which tends to convince me that when he adopted it he must have been mad. Now, dear father, do let me try him again. Let us have no doubt on this subject now. Let us prove—absolutely *prove*—whether he is that which you have described him to be or not."

"I think, my child, that this has been pretty well proved. I have no doubt on the subject myself."

"Then let me have the doubt which I entertain removed. Let me try him once more. Let me write to him again."

"In order that you may be again grossly insulted?"

"No, he'll not again insult me; but even if he should, what can surpass the insult here? But I'll write in a calm and conciliating style, and beg of him to give me an intelligible explanation."

"Well, my dear, well;" replied Freeman, "as you please. If he should *condescend* to give you any further explanation, it will be intelligible enough."

Jane, still hoping that her conjectures, having reference to George's temporary insanity, might prove correct, went to her desk and wrote as follows:—

"Dear George,

"What am I to understand by the note I have just received? Pray, dear, explain.

"I asked you in my former note to call; but, perhaps, you are not well: and if you be not, do not answer this now, dear, but wait until you are tranquil.

"My love, I had the pleasure of seeing Sir John this morning, and he told me, with much kindness, that every obstacle to our marriage had been removed. You can imagine how delighted I was to hear this, dear George, and my request that you would come to me proceeded from my anxiety to communicate the happy intelligence to you.

"Now, will you come this evening, and converse with me on this subject. Come, dear love, come! and pour into my heart the only balm that can heal that wound which you have, perhaps unconsciously, inflicted. Come, love, come; and tranquillize the mind of your own devoted

"JANE.

"P.S. Pray, do not answer this if you be not well."

Having despatched this note, with instructions for the servant to wait for an answer, and to enquire particularly after George's health, she seated herself by the side of her father to await the result with all the patience at her command.

"Well, my dear," said Freeman, who was smoking his pipe thoughtfully, "you are hard to be convinced."

"It is hard, dear father—it is, indeed, hard to be convinced of the perfidy of one whom you love."

"The conviction will soon come, my child; and when it does—"

"Why, even then, I must love him still."

"What! when you have proved him to be a villain?"

"Heaven forbid that this should ever be *proved*! But even if it

be, I still must love him. I feel the influence he has acquired, dear father, to be irresistible. I am but an automaton, of which he commands the motive power. My feelings are but his creatures, for he created those feelings, and retains dominion over them. I can scarcely—where *he* is concerned—be considered a responsible being. I seek not, dear father, to rid myself of that responsibility which attaches to my most unhappy fall. I mention it but to show that the control I have over my feelings is but slight, and that my heart is as powerfully attracted by him as moths are by the flame which destroys them.”

“Well, it’s of no use,”—said Freeman—“it’s of no use to attempt to bring *reason* to bear upon a point like this. Why, my dear, you talk of his being in a state of enthusiasm!—you are a greater enthusiast than he! But when you have proved what you shortly *will* prove, other feelings will arise—at least I hope so—I hope so.”

Jane was silent and sank into a reverie, while Freeman continued to smoke his pipe—sometimes puffing calmly and sometimes with violence, according to the state of his feelings at the time—until the servant returned with the following note, which she eagerly opened and read:—

“WOMAN!

“Trouble me no more! I thought that my former communication would have been sufficient to convince you that I wished not to be annoyed by your indelicate importunities; but I find that it has but increased your characteristic boldness.

“You speak of marriage—of *our* marriage!—and you state that every obstacle has been removed; but there is one obstacle which can never be removed, and that obstacle is Morality! Morality must ever be a bar to such a marriage as that which you contemplate.

“I fear that it is sinful—even by way of illustration—to take lower ground in a case of this character; but if morality did *not* form a barrier so insuperable as in my mind it does—mere policy—mere worldly policy—would be sufficient to prompt me to abandon the thought of marrying one who so willingly yielded—or who could be by any means prevailed upon to yield—the brightest moral ornament that can adorn her sex.

“Such a marriage must be hateful in the sight of God and man. Happiness never sprang from such a marriage. Checks, bickerings, heart-burnings, and odious epithets, are the fruits of which such an immoral marriage is the germ, and I marvel that you do not know me better than to imagine that I would, by either threats or entreaties, be induced to contract such a marriage as that.

“No! I have erred, but I am not mad! Therefore write to me no more! I will open no more of your indelicate notes, for they are indelicate in the extreme! No woman of common decency would ask a man to marry her: no woman possessing that natural pride which constitutes at once the charm and dignity of her sex would beg of a man to make her his wife: yet this *you* do—and I presume with-

out a blush !—but if you still entertain the remotest thought that you will ever be *my* wife, repudiate that thought as I repudiate you !

“Think not, woman, that I bear malice. In *my* breast no animosity is harboured. You have caused me much pain, but I forgive you. You have placed before me strong temptations to sin, but I forgive you sincerely and implore you as a friend to crave forgiveness of Him whom you have more deeply offended.

“I am still

“Your well-wisher,

“GEORGE CROLY.”

Jane, who had previously made up her mind to subdue her emotions if possible, and who certainly did succeed in preserving a degree of firmness which, under the circumstances, may be said to have been wonderful, having read this precious document, gave it in silence to her father.

“Well,” said Freeman, who had been watching her countenance narrowly, and who had been led by her calmness to imagine that his judgment had been somewhat too hastily formed, “what does he say, my dear ? what does he say ?”

“Read, dear father,” replied Jane, “read.”

“Woman !” he exclaimed as he glanced at the compellation—
“Woman ! The wretch !”

“Dear father, read !” said Jane. “Make no comments.”

Freeman did read : he managed to read the note through, and struggled hard to conceal the feelings of rage it inspired.

“Well,” said he at length, “are you satisfied now ? Are you *now* convinced that he is a most consummate villain ?”

“No, dear father : no,” replied Jane, “I am not convinced yet.”

“Not yet convinced !” cried Freeman.

“No :—But give me some water,” she added faintly—“some water !”

“Some brandy, my girl. Have some brandy :” cried Freeman, who filed a glass on the instant, and held it to her lips, and then bathed her temples affectionately, and wept.

“I feel better, dear father,” said Jane, after a pause, during which Freeman held her to his heart, while he indignantly dashed away his tears. “I feel much better now.”

“You feel better, my girl, but not yet convinced.”

“He *is* not the man he appears to be.”

“Do I not say that he is not ? Have I not said again and again that he is a villain ?”

“He is not a villain, dear father.”

“Not a villain !”

“No !” exclaimed Jane, with startling energy ; as a flood of tears nearly choked her utterance. “No ! my heart tells me that he is not. I have been endeavouring to test his sincerity ; and he is now testing the strength of my affection. No, dear father—no ! he is not a villain after all !”

"Jane, my love, Jane!" said Freeman, soothingly, "you advised me to be calm. Come, my girl, come!—take the same advice from me."

"I will, father—yes, I will be calm. It is indeed a cruel course for him to pursue; but I'll not believe that he means—Hark!" she added with a start, as the outer bell rang, "he is here!—he is here! He has come to heal at once all the wounds he has inflicted! Did I not say that I would not believe—Hush!" she whispered, as the hall door was opened—"hush!"

"That is Sir John's voice," said Freeman; and Jane's renewed hopes sank again.

Sir John was announced, and as he entered the room, Jane, with the view of composing herself in private, begged permission to retire.

"You are not well, my poor girl—I see that you are not well," observed Sir John, as he pressed her trembling hand. "But have courage, my child—have courage. Come! we'll have a little conversation together before I leave. Freeman," he added, when Jane had left the room, "I have come to see what progress has been made. I understand that several notes have passed between Jane and George, and I feel, of course, anxious to ascertain their nature."

"You shall see them, Sir John, you *shall* see them," said Freeman—"at least, those which he has had the heart to write to her. This is the first. She had written to him, begging of him to call, and this is the answer she received."

Sir John took the note, and no sooner commenced reading than he knit his brows, and pressed his lips, and inwardly groaned. He, however, read it through, and when he had done so, he threw it on the table with an expression of contempt.

"Bad, Freeman, bad!" said he, shaking his head. "Bad—very bad—very bad indeed!"

"You see, Sir John, he throws all the blame upon *her*. She was the seducer!—*he* was betrayed!"

"I see—I see! Well, what followed this?"

"She wrote to him again: she wrote in a calm and gentle strain for an explanation, and here it is."

Sir John read it: he read it with feelings of disgust, and threw it from him with intense indignation.

"Oh Freeman, Freeman," said he, "this is a sad affair indeed! for, while you have a daughter who has been basely betrayed, I have a son who has *proved* himself to be—I dare not say what—I dare not say what. Well," he added, after a pause, during which his emotions were painful in the extreme, "and what does the poor dear girl say to all this?"

"She'll not believe that he is in earnest."

"Not believe that he is in *earnest*!"

"No."

"You amaze me!"

"She says that he is merely testing the strength of her affection."

"Poor girl!—poor girl! He has acquired a powerful influence over her indeed! But Freeman," he added, "let us not suddenly deceive her."

"There is no fear of that, Sir John; no, not the slightest: that is not to be done."

"Let us not attempt it. You understand why. That she deceives herself, poor girl, we know. There never was a man more in earnest than he was when these two brutal notes were written!"

"Sir John," said Freeman, "I feel that nothing can diminish my respect for you; but, if it were not for *one* consideration, she should not be tied to a man like that, were he worth half the world!"

"He's not worthy of her—he's not worthy of her: I feel—although I am his father—compelled to say that he's *not* worthy of her."

"But she'll not believe that! No, even now she conceives him to be a perfect man!"

"Well, Freeman, well! It is amazing—it certainly is amazing!—but it only shows to what an excess of credulity love like hers will lead."

"One would have thought," pursued Freeman, "that two notes like those would have banished all *hope* on that subject, if not indeed all her fond love!—instead of which, they actually appear to have strengthened both! There never was devotion like hers."

"Oh! it is painful—very painful, to contemplate; and how we are to act, I don't know. The last time I spoke to him on the subject—I tell you in confidence, Freeman—I urged him to marry her by all the means at my command."

"You *did*, Sir John?"

"I did. I even went so far as to give him but three days to consider—with an intimation that if his decision were adverse, I should know how to act, which he seemed to understand. I told him that her want of fortune should make but slight difference to him, and—"

"I'll give her, Sir John," interrupted Freeman—"I'll give her all I can down, and leave her all I have."

"But that is not the point," pursued Sir John; "that does not appear to enter into his calculations. The only ostensible ground upon which he refuses to marry her, is the fact of her having yielded."

"But he caused her to yield!"

"I have urged that strongly, but, I fear, without effect. However, let us wait until the three days have expired, and if his decision be against the marriage, then, Freeman—then I *shall* know how to act."

"Sir John," said Freeman, with strong emotion, "I'd no idea that in you my poor child had such a friend. I knew you to be noble-minded, generous, and just, but I had no thought of your having been so kind to her. I thank you, Sir John; with all a father's heart, I thank you!"

"Freeman, remember this is between ourselves. But where is this poor girl?"

"I'll send her to you."

"No, no, no! don't *you* leave."

"I'd rather be absent while she is with you."

"Well, then, when she comes you can leave us together."

Freeman rang the bell and summoned Jane, and when she appeared,

Sir John rose and led her to a chair, as Freeman, with the show of an apology, left the room.

"Well," said Sir John, with a smile which denoted a much lighter heart than his really was then, "how is this love affair of yours progressing?"

"But slowly, Sir John," replied Jane—"but slowly."

"You have been writing to each other, I find."

"Have you seen the notes, Sir John, he sent to me?"

"Yes, my dear, I have; but I can't say that I very highly approve of the style. I certainly once knew a noble young fellow who, when writing to the lady to whom he paid his addresses, and to whom he was ardently attached, almost invariably adopted the ironical style. But they understood each other perfectly. She knew that when he said that he hated her, he in reality meant that he loved her; and, in fact, she became so accustomed to this irony that, when on one occasion he inadvertently declared that she was the mistress of his heart, she didn't like it, and, to my knowledge, demanded an explanation. Now, whether you understand George as well as this lady understood my friend or not, I, of course, am unable to say; but it certainly appears to me to be a very strange style to adopt."

"Did your friend eventually marry the lady of whom you speak?"

"Oh, yes! he would not have lost her for the world."

"Did George know him, Sir John?"

"Not personally. He has frequently heard me speak of him."

"And this circumstance has been mentioned in his presence?"

"Doubtless."

"Then he has adopted the same style?"

"Nay, I do not say that."

"Oh, I feel sure of it! I knew that he could never write thus to me in earnest! Sir John, you have given me the key to it all!"

"Well, my dear, if that be the key, I am glad that I had it in my possession."

"He never *could* have written in that style unless he wrote ironically. It is so unlike him—so contrary to his character—so different to the kind and affectionate manner in which he talks! It shocked me, certainly; but now I see it all. He has been jesting with me: and doubtless when I tell him what effect these notes had, he'll laugh heartily at my fears."

"It appears to me, my dear, to be a somewhat cruel jest—unless, indeed, you perfectly understand each other."

"Certainly he ought to have given me some intimation of its being a jest; but when he explains, I shall very soon forgive him."

"Well, my dear, how do you mean to act?"

"I scarcely know how to act, Sir John. I feel afraid to write to him again!"

"Perhaps you had better not do so at present."

"I will act upon your advice, Sir John, certainly. Whatever you advise me to do, shall be done."

"Then for two days take no notice whatever—unless, indeed, he should call."

"Two *days!*" echoed Jane.

"I have a reason—a powerful reason—for thus advising you."

"Very good. But he'll surely call upon me to-morrow!"

"He may. It is possible. If he should, you can, of course, say what you please; but if he should not call, take my advice."

"I will, Sir John—I will," replied Jane.

"Very well. And now, my dear girl, I must leave you."

"I hope," said Jane, as he rose, "I hope you believe that I feel grateful."

"Say nothing on that subject now," replied Sir John, who, having taken leave of her, proceeded to the next room in order to have a few parting words with Freeman.

"Now," she exclaimed, on being left alone, "this apparently dreadful mystery is solved. He wrote ironically, and that interprets all. Dear, dear Sir John!—how I love you for giving me the key! But if even you had not, I should never have believed that George was really in earnest! This, however, clears up all doubt. Where he writes 'Woman,' he means 'My love,' or perhaps 'My dearest love!' and where 'boldness' is written, of course he means 'fondness.' How stupid I was not to see this before! He means, of course, the contrary of what he writes! Now, then," she added, on taking up George's last note, "I'll go through it all, and see what he really does mean. I'll write it out, and when he comes I'll just prove to him how perfectly well I understand him. You shall not laugh at me—much, Master George, after all! I'll not *tell* you what my feelings really were! It was rather too bad of you, though, I must say; but you shall see, Master George—you shall see that that which you intended for a sting—But did he intend it for a sting? No, no! he is not so cruel. He merely meant to make me a little anxious until he came to explain all. I shall scold him for it, however. He *must* be scolded! But now let me see what he really meant to write."

She then went through the note, and when she had written what she imagined he meant, it stood thus:

"MY DEAREST LOVE!

"Trouble yourself no more. I feared that my former communication would have had the effect of inducing you to believe that I was annoyed; but I find that it has but increased your characteristic fondness.

"You speak of marriage—of *our* marriage—and you state that every obstacle has been removed. I am aware of it, and now Morality, as well as Affection, points to the marriage we both contemplate.

"I fear that it is sinful to take lower ground in a case of this description; but if Morality did *not* prompt me so irresistibly as it does, mere policy—mere worldly policy—would be sufficient to induce me to marry *her* whose devotion and confidence have been so unbounded.

that she has placed even her reputation in the hands of him whom she loves.

"Such a marriage must be grateful in the sight of God and man. Happiness must spring from such a marriage. Checks, bickerings, heartburnings, and odious epithets, can never be the fruits of which such a marriage is the germ; and I marvel that you do not know me better than to imagine that I could, by either threats or entreaties, be induced to forego such a marriage as that.

"No! we have erred, but we are not mad! Therefore trouble yourself no more. No man of common delicacy can wish a woman to relinquish that natural pride which constitutes at once the charm and dignity of her sex; and if you still entertain the slightest thought that I shall *not* make you my wife, repudiate that thought, my love, as I do.

"I am afraid that that idea *has* been entertained; but I forgive you—I forgive you sincerely—and I hope that we shall both be forgiven by Him whom we have most certainly offended.

"I remain still

"Dear Jane,

"Your own affectionate

"GEORGE."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RING.

THE health of Lejeune improved daily. The removal of all apprehensions having reference to the future position of Juliana, had had so powerful an effect that Mr. Raymond pronounced him convalescent, and at the same time intimated to Charles that "the day" might with safety be fixed.

On receiving this pleasing intelligence, Charles resolved on embracing the earliest opportunity of naming the subject to Juliana, with the view of inducing her to prepare for the event in earnest; and as an opportunity almost immediately afterwards offered, he opened the matter at once.

"My love," said he with a smile, as he took her right hand, "will the ring which you have on this finger, fit that?"

"Fit which, dear?" enquired Juliana, as she looked up, and blushed.

"This," replied Charles, taking her left hand, and pointing to the finger in question with wonderful precision.

Juliana patted him playfully on the cheek, and blushed again.

"Is it large enough?" pursued Charles.

"Indeed," said Juliana, "I know nothing about it."

"It appears to me to be about the size," continued Charles. "Will you do me the favour to try it?"

"Why, dear?—why do you wish to have it tried?"

"Why, my love, it would be so ridiculous if I were, in a case like this, to proceed in ignorance. Do me the favour to put it on—or, allow me to do so."

Juliana smiled, and averted her face, but kept her hand passively in his.

"I thought so!" he added, having tried the ring. "I thought it was *about* the size! It fits admirably. Will you lend me this ring?"

"You do not wear rings, dear!"

"True; but I have taken quite a fancy to this!"

"I'll not lend it, dear: I'll *give* it to you with pleasure! But this is not the correct *style* of ring for a gentleman. Let me present you with one of a different description."

"Do so; but in the interim lend me this. I do not want to wear it."

"Then what can you want it for?"

"I want," replied Charles, with an expression of the most intense affection—"I want to purchase one precisely the same size, but of a plainer and a more sacred character; for Raymond has just intimated to me something which has convinced me that such a ring will, in a very few days, adorn this identical finger!"

Juliana was silent.

"Now," he continued, having kissed her hand affectionately as he drew off the ring, "the crisis is near. The ordeal will be very dreadful, doubtless,—and how I shall go through the ceremony, I can't of course tell; but, in order that I may inspire sufficient courage to walk from the vestry to the altar, I must know when it is to be done. Now what day is it to be?"

"Indeed, dear," replied Juliana, blushing deeply, "I must leave it to papa!"

"Very well! Will you go up at once, then, and speak to him on the subject?"

"I'd rather," replied Juliana, tremulously—"I'd rather he should be spoken to by you."

"Well! will you depute me to speak to him?"

"Had we not better hear what Mrs. Wardle says first?"

"As you please, love. Where is she?"

"I left her up stairs. Shall I run and tell her that you wish to speak to her?"

"Will you return with her?"

"Can you not speak to her while I am absent?"

"Not so well—not nearly so well: I shall want your assistance, of course. There! run away and bring her down with you."

Juliana left the room, and shortly afterwards reappeared with the Widow, who, by the archness of her smile as she entered, convinced Charles that she understood perfectly what it was all about.

"Mrs. Wardle," said Charles, "we have a knotty point to settle—a very knotty point; it is, in fact, neither more nor less than the Gordian knot, and we are anxious to have the benefit of your judgment

and experience. You are aware, of course, that the day named for our marriage is that on which Mr. Lejeune can with safety go to church to return thanks for his recovery. Very well. Now Mr. Raymond has this morning intimated to me that this can be done with safety now, and as neither Juliana nor I can command sufficient courage to fix the day, we want you to fix it for us."

"What!" exclaimed the Widow, smiling archly "can you not do this yourselves?"

"I couldn't do it for the world," replied Charles: "I'm too timid! I should blush so!—I know I should! *Please* fix it for us."

"I scarcely know which to admire most," observed the Widow, "your anxiety or your modesty; and yet when I look here, I feel constrained to give the preference to the former."

"My modesty springs from my anxiety."

"But the parent is far more conspicuous than the child."

"I know," returned Charles, "that it's of no use for me to attempt repartees with you. But will you do us this favour?"

"How can I, my dear sir? How is it possible for me to fix the day?"

"Well, what would you advise?"

"I would advise you, in the first place, to speak to Mr. Lejeune on the subject."

"Well?"

"Well, if he should consent to the day being fixed, we'll fix the day conditionally."

"Conditionally! But what are to be the conditions?"

"There is but one: and that has reference to the presence of Sir John."

"Very good! Shall I go up at once?"

"You may as well; and during your absence we'll endeavour to come to some decision. I suppose," she added playfully, "that you are not at all particular to three months or so."

"Why don't you say three years or so? *Three months!* You mean three days!"

"Well, we'll be as considerate as possible, and endeavour to meet your views. You need not be absent long: it will not take us more than five minutes to decide."

"Very good," returned Charles, who left them at once and proceeded to the drawing-room, in which Lejeune had been permitted that morning to sit."

"Well, Charles," said Lejeune, extending his hand with a smile, "I am getting a man again now, you perceive."

"I am happy indeed to see you here," returned Charles.

"Oh! I am getting on fast."

"I shall be very soon expecting you to accompany us to church," observed Charles, with a look of great significance.

"Raymond was speaking to me about that this morning."

"He told *me* that you would very soon be able to go."

"I shall be able, I hope, to manage it now in a few days, Charles. Have you and Juliana come to any arrangement?"

"We could not, of course, without having consulted you."

"I must leave it in your hands. You must arrange it between you. I can say no more, my dear Charles, than that you have my consent to fix what day you please: provided, of course, that Sir John's convenience be consulted."

"I expect that any time will suit his convenience. I intend, however, to write to him to-night, for the fact is, Juliana and Mrs. Wardle are now waiting for your consent to the day being fixed."

"Oh!" returned Lejeune, with a smile, "I see. Mrs. Wardle has undertaken to manage it. Mrs. Wardle is an excellent creature—a very excellent creature. I must in some way prove to Mrs. Wardle how highly I esteem her. I have been thinking of this nearly the whole of the morning, and I don't know that I can do better than present her, on the day of your marriage, with a service of plate—a tea service—of the most chaste and elegant design that can be met with. Now I should like, Charles, to leave this commission in your hands. Will you do me the favour to undertake it?"

"Certainly," replied Charles, "if, indeed, you think it necessary."

"I hold it to be necessary," rejoined Lejeune, "to present her with some substantial testimony of my respect—to prove to her how grateful I feel for all her affectionate kindness to Juliana; and as I don't know that anything will look better on the table, when surrounded by her friends, than a service of plate, I must get you to make choice of one, without reference to expense."

"Very well," replied Charles.

"But not a word—not a syllable on the subject to them!"

"No; of course not."

"When you have chosen, let me know, and I'll send an inscription. And now, as they are waiting for my consent, run and tell them that you have obtained it."

Charles then returned to Juliana and the Widow, and while the latter received him with an open smile, the former merely glanced at him timidly.

"Well," said he, addressing the Widow, "as it appears that you are to officiate as the mistress of the ceremonies, I have to announce to you that Mr. Lejeune has consented to the day being fixed, and that I therefore await your decision."

"Then know all men by these presents," replied the Widow, playfully assuming an air of official dignity, "that by the advice of the Privy Council, it is our pleasure that this treaty of peace and pure affection be signed on the twentieth instant; and that as this is the tenth, the settlement of divers highly important preliminaries precludes the expediency of signing the said treaty before."

"I am content," said Charles, approaching Juliana, whom—even before the Widow!—he affectionately embraced; "I am perfectly content, and as the first official act of our mistress of the ceremonies has been with so much dignity performed, I hope that she will consent to retain office, with the full assurance of our highest consideration."

He then took the Widow's hand and kissed it, even in the presence

of Juliana!—which was very extraordinary conduct on his part; notwithstanding it was permitted to pass without reproof.

"I will now," said the Widow, "with your permission, retire. I am delighted to find that my official duties have been satisfactorily performed."

"You have but just entered upon them," said Charles. "You have more—much more to do yet! You have not only to decide upon what robes are to be worn on the occasion, but what we are to do after the interesting ceremony, and where we are to go, with a hundred other matters, the whole of which I leave to your wisdom and experience, in the full conviction that the result of your grave deliberations will be quite satisfactory to the nation at large."

"The compliment is appreciated," said the Widow, bending profoundly; "but I have an impression that when we have called Sir John to our counsels, we shall find that he has something to propose having reference to these matters, which will meet the views of all. Will you write to him to-night?"

"Certainly."

"Then urge him to come up as soon as possible, in order that we may have the benefit of his advice and assistance."

"I will do so. I shall also send a note to old George."

"Of course, love," said Juliana. "He must be present."

"Oh *he'll* come. The family party would not be complete without him."

"Nor will it be, my love, even with him," said Juliana. "My dear uncle Richard, I fear, will not be present."

"Juliana," said Charles, as he led both her and the Widow to the sofa, "I have something to say to you on that subject. You understand, of course, that he is abroad. Very well. Now you know how firmly your papa and he have ever been attached to each other: you also know that his absence on this occasion—if indeed he be absent—will be regretted by us all; but as it will of itself be more especially painful to your papa, I would suggest the propriety of not even mentioning his name. I know of my own knowledge that if he can be present he will; but I also, my love, know it to be next to impossible. You understand me?"

"I do, dear," replied Juliana. "I'll not mention his name in connection with this subject again."

"To us, my love, it is a matter of comparatively slight importance; but although he is, happily, convalescent, your papa is not sufficiently strong yet to bear much."

"I understand you, dear, perfectly," returned Juliana. "You conceive that the fact of my expressing my regret might annoy him, and I am sure that I would not annoy him for worlds."

"I am sure of it—quite sure of it; I therefore ventured to offer the suggestion. And now," he added gaily, "having, by virtue of calling into action the tact and intelligence of our highly-accomplished mistress of the ceremonies, surmounted the only difficulty that remained, I must beg of you to permit me to absent myself till dinner

time, as I have a commission entrusted to me of a peculiarly pleasing character."

"Which is, of course," said the Widow, "to be kept a profound secret?"

"Which is, of course," echoed Charles, "to be kept a profound secret."

"I can guess where he is going, dear," observed Juliana, as she turned to the Widow with a timid smile. "He is going to the jeweller's."

"I am," said Charles. You are quite right: "I am. Will you do me the favour to accompany me?"

"Nay, dear: that would be very incorrect."

"Oh, I see!" cried the Widow. "The jeweller's—exactly! Well, I must admit—"

"You don't know all," interrupted Charles, playfully. "However, if you'll *not* go with me, I of course must go alone. We dine at the usual hour, I presume."

"Yes, dear, yes."

"Very good. I'll be punctual. And now adieu! Juliana," he added, as he again affectionately embraced her, "the twentieth will be a happy day indeed!"

He then, with a joyous heart, left them—not, as they imagined, with the view of purchasing the ring, but for the purpose of executing that commission with which he had been entrusted by Lejeune.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WIDOW'S DECISION.

IN the morning, Sir John received a letter from Charles, announcing that the twentieth was the day that had been fixed, and expressing a hope that he would make it convenient to be in town three or four days previously.

George also received a letter by the same post inviting him to the ceremony, but it scarcely need be stated that the feelings with which the announcement of the twentieth inspired Sir John, were diametrically opposed to those which it created in the malicious breast of George. Sir John looked forward to the day with joy and pride; George viewed its approach with hatred the most intense.

"My birthright," thought he, "is now in imminent peril. Something must be done! But what?—what can be done? I must dwell upon this: I must dwell upon it deeply. I must bring the whole strength of my mind to bear upon it. I must *not* in silence suffer myself to be robbed! On the twentieth they marry: and how are they to live? Why out of the estate:—how else can they live, when he is but a student and she has not a shilling, while her father and her uncle are both ruined men! It is not, however, this marriage alone.

There are other matters pending which must tend to impoverish *me*. There's the contemplated marriage of the old man with his Adelaide! *She* must have a handsome settlement out of the estate—having nothing of her own. Then there's this girl Freeman!—she must be provided for—her father having merely sufficient to work his farm. The time is come for me to look out! All these, if I dally, will be pensioned upon the estate, and I shall be left comparatively penniless, when I ought to inherit the whole! But how—how am I to prevent it? That's the question! But into that question I'll not enter now. I'll nerve myself and collect my thoughts; and bring them to bear upon that point alone!"

Sir John was, of course, unconscious of the existence of those feelings which rankled now in the breast of George. He noticed in the course of the morning that George looked more gloomy than usual, but that he ascribed to the fact of his having made up his mind to abandon Jane. He had no conception that it proceeded from an aversion to Charles's marriage, or from any apprehensions having reference to the estate: indeed his mind was nearly absorbed at the time in the contemplation of his own position, and especially as he deemed it expedient, before making the arrangements he had in view, to know the Widow's final decision on that subject of which her absence had caused him to think more than ever.

"But how is this to be known?" he enquired of himself, as he sat musing in the library alone. "How am I to obtain her decision, without going up expressly in order to see her, and then coming down again to make my arrangements? I cannot write to her on the subject!—Yet, why not? What objection can there be to it? Why not write? Why not write to her at once? There can be no impropriety in writing: in fact, the thing might be done more effectually so. But then what can I say? I cannot urge her to violate her vow. I cannot try to persuade her that Wardle did not in reality *mean* what he said, or that the vow was not intended for universal application. I don't at all hold with it: I can't say I hold with it: no man, in my view, is justified in extorting such a promise as that, and especially as he had not the power to leave her sufficient to provide the common necessities of life. But then, poor man, he depended upon me: yes, yes, that's true: he depended upon me. I promised him that I would take care of her, and he, with that promise, was satisfied. Still he might have left it a little open: he might have introduced a saving clause—at least, he might have exempted me. But he didn't. She promised that she would not marry again, and that, of course, comprehends all. What, then, am I to say? How can I go to work? I can't endeavour to prevail upon her to break that promise, and yet I must write with this object in view, if I write at all. It's a difficult job—a very difficult job. How am I to put it? I want to say 'do,' and don't want to say 'do.' What *am* I to say, then? Nothing? Stop! If I rightly remember, when I named the subject to her, I left it thus:—that she was to reflect—not on the expediency of violating her promise, but whether, knowing his

motive for enjoining it, and believing that if he had contemplated this it never would have been enjoined, that promise was really of a character so sacred as she imagined. That's how I left it; and that appears to me to be the only point of view in which it is possible to place it with any prospect of success. Well, then, put it so; ask her if she *has* reflected, and then you'll be able to get at the result. Well, I'll try—certainly I'll try. I know I shall make a poor job of it—I know I shall; nevertheless, I'll try."

He did try; and this was the letter he produced :—

"DEAR ADELAIDE,

"I received, this morning, a letter from Charles, announcing that the day of his marriage with our dear Juliana had been fixed. I am glad that Lejeune has so much improved in health as to have rendered it possible to name that day; and I have not the slightest doubt that it will be a very happy day indeed.

"I think, however, that it might be made happier still. I think that we might have on that day an excess of happiness; and as this depends entirely upon you, I write to you for the purpose of recalling your serious attention to it.

"You will recollect the subject on which we had some slight conversation the night before you left the Hall; you will recollect that when you had explained to me the circumstances under which that promise was made—of which I had no previous knowledge—I, abstaining from every effort to prevail upon you to violate that promise, begged of you to consider whether it could in reality now be held to be of a character so sacred as you imagined.

"Now, my dear Adelaide, I have thought of this seriously since, and have endeavoured dispassionately to reconcile those circumstances which at first sight appear so conflicting; but without offering any direct opinion upon the subject—without stating the conclusion at which I have arrived, or attempting to persuade you to pursue a course contrary to that which you may, perhaps, imagine you ought to pursue, I would submit for your calm consideration a few questions which immediately bear upon the point.

"In the first place, then, do you think that he by whom the promise was enjoined ever imagined that I should propose?

"Secondly: Do you believe that if he had imagined this, that promise would have been enjoined at all?

"Thirdly: Do you conceive, taking into consideration the high esteem in which he held me, that if it were possible for him to sanction our marriage, he would withhold his consent? and

"Fourthly: If you can answer—conscientiously answer—the preceding questions in the negative, may you not, as far as that promise is concerned, correctly consider yourself absolved?

"Now, my Adelaide—for whether you be my wife or not, you will be my Adelaide still,—I have suggested these questions for your consideration, not with the view of warping your judgment, for I feel quite sure that the course you will adopt will be the right course, but in

order that you may calmly reflect upon them, and let me know your final decision.

"I will not explain how delighted I shall be, or how happy I shall feel, in the event of that decision being favourable to my suit, because that might be construed into a desire on my part to influence the result. Your motives, I am convinced, will, in either case, be pure; and you know me too well to render it necessary for me to say more than this—that, let your decision be what it may, I will be ever

"Your affectionate friend,

"JOHN CROLY."

"Now," thought he, having read it carefully over, "*I think* this will do. I have left the point open. I have left it entirely to her. I have offered no opinion, except by implication; nor have I placed before her any sophistry to surmount. There it is, perfectly plain and straightforward, and all she has to do is to decide. I have not perhaps displayed quite sufficient anxiety; it may, perhaps, appear to be tantamount to saying, 'It's a matter of no consequence,—say yes or no!'—and yet she knows me better: she knows that it is extremely delicate ground for me to touch upon; she knows what decision I should like her to come to, and therefore, as it is, it shall go."

And it did go; and a note from George went with it to this effect:—

"MY DEAR CHARLES,

"I received your communication this morning with great pleasure. The prospect of your happiness gives me joy. I shall be indeed delighted to be present at the ceremony, and I pray that felicity here and hereafter may, like a sacred halo, encompass you and yours.

"I am, dear Charles,

"Your ever affectionate brother,

"GEORGE."

Now, when the Widow received Sir John's letter, Juliana, who was present with Charles, exclaimed—"Now we shall know when Sir John will be here!" and as the Widow had no idea of the real nature of its contents, she drew towards Juliana as she opened it, in order that they might read it together; but the moment "Dear Adelaide" met Juliana's glance, she started and drew back, and smiled at the Widow, who blushed, but with wonderful presence of mind proceeded to hand the enclosed note to Charles.

"From George!" said Charles, as he opened the note, and having read it, he gave it to Juliana.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, "how nicely he writes!—how beautifully, dear, he expresses himself! Oh! I shall love him more and more! But he does not say when he thinks of coming."

"They'll doubtless," said Charles, "come together. Does it say there," he added, addressing the Widow, "when they think of coming up?"

"No," replied the Widow; "Sir John merely says that he has.

received your letter announcing that that which he believes will be a very happy day, has been fixed."

"Nothing more?" enquired Juliana, archly.

"Nothing more on that subject, dear."

"Not even name the day on which we may expect him?"

"No, my love, he doesn't say a word about that."

"Dear me! that's very extraordinary."

"He scarcely had time to make up his mind," said Charles, as the Widow placed the letter in her bosom. "We may, by the next post, hear from him again."

"I have to write to him to-night," observed the Widow, "and by return we shall doubtless know all!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Charles, with an expression of curiosity, "there's some freemasonry between you!"

"Have you not appointed me mistress of the ceremonies?" enquired the Widow, with a smile.

"But he knows nothing of that appointment," said Charles.

"It might have been anticipated by him."

"Well, I have no desire to dive into any of your secrets: work it amongst you as you please. I leave it in your hands entirely. And now," he added, playfully, "what are you going to do with me this morning? Are you going to take me out? or are you going to keep me in? or what are you going to do with me?—only say!"

"Well," replied the Widow, "if you promise to be a very, very good boy indeed, you shall take a nice walk with Juliana, while I write a long official letter to Sir John."

"But can you not go with us?"

"I must beg to be excused. I have much to think of, and much to write. They who are in office must attend to their official duties, if they wish to avoid censure."

"She then—struggling to assume an air of gaiety—withdrew; but she in reality retired with an almost broken heart!

"You are correct," cried Juliana with an animated smile, as she seized the arm of Charles when the Widow had left the room. "You are perfectly correct in your conjecture, dear! It is to be! I am sure of it—perfectly sure!"

"What, my love? What?" cried Charles. "What is to be?"

"The marriage of Sir John with dear, *dear* Mrs. Wardle."

"Indeed!"

"Oh! I feel convinced of it—quite convinced now!"

"Well!" said Charles. "Well! I shall be glad if it be so: but what has induced that conviction?"

"The fact of his having addressed her as 'dear Adelaide!'"

"*Dear* Adelaide! What, in the letter she received from him this morning!"

"Yes! She opened it before me in order that we might read it together; but the moment I saw that of course I drew back."

"*Dear* Adelaide!" repeated Charles thoughtfully, although with a smile the meaning of which he would not have explained to Juliana for the world. "Well!" he added gaily. "It *may* be so!"

"It is so!" rejoined Juliana. "I am perfectly sure of it!"

"Well, my love, if you are sure that it is so, there's an end of all conjecture, of course."

"But don't you think yourself, dear, that if it were not so, he would have addressed her, not as 'Dear Adelaide,' but as 'My dear Mrs. Wardle?'"

"Well! You know what she said when you mentioned the subject to her before."

"Yes, love. But that was *plain* 'Adelaide,' not 'Dear Adelaide.'"

"Well, the difference is certainly conspicuous, but she would ascribe the fact of her being thus addressed to precisely the same cause."

"I'll know," said Juliana in a playful whisper. "I'll ascertain. I'll ask her. Oh, I shall be so delighted if it be so!"

"In order to ascertain," returned Charles, "you must approach the subject cautiously."

"Oh, she is such a dear good soul—she'll tell me any thing."

"If that be the case," said Charles smiling, "of course you are certain to know. But," he added, "will you *go* for a walk?"

"With pleasure, dear," replied Juliana. "I'll run up and put on my things at once. But should it be as I suspect it is, dear, will it not be delightful?"

Charles smiled, and having embraced her, said, "There, run away," and Juliana left in search of the Widow.

"My dear!" she exclaimed, having found her in tears. "What on earth is the matter? Why—why are you thus?"

"The feeling will pass off presently, love," replied the Widow somewhat faintly. "I do not feel well."

Juliana flew to the eau de Cologne, and began to apply it with the most affectionate solicitude; and, although eau de Cologne was not what the Widow wanted, she appreciated the kindness which prompted its application.

"Do you feel better now, dear?" inquired Juliana after a pause, during which she kissed her brow and smoothed her hair and bathed her temples, and performed all those little affectionate offices which the kind-hearted only know how to perform.

"I shall feel better presently, my love," replied the Widow. "I was merely entertaining a few sad thoughts. But do not let me detain you. You are going out with Charles."

"Nay, dear, I cannot think of leaving you thus."

"You will find, my love, when you have dressed yourself, that I shall be firm again—perfectly firm. Go, and when you return, I'll explain what I promised."

"Explain what you promised, dear?"

"Do you not remember what I promised to explain?"

"You said once that you *might* explain to me—"

"Yes, that is what I mean. When you return I shall have sufficient firmness to do so."

Juliana kissed her again, and left the room ; but so anxious was she to have the promised explanation, that in less than five minutes she returned.

"How do you feel now, dear?" she enquired.

"Better,—much better, my love," replied the Widow. "It was but a fit of sadness, of which you shall now know the cause. Doubtless," she continued, "you thought it strange—very strange—that when viewed in connection with my position at the Hall, Sir John should address me as 'Adelaide.' I know that you thought it strange when Charles alluded to it immediately after Sir John had left town ; but as you must, my love, have thought it still more strange that he should, in his letter, have addressed me '*dear* Adelaide,' I feel bound, notwithstanding I know the purity of your mind, to explain to you the position in which I now stand."

"There's a dear!" cried Juliana, drawing still more closely to her ; "I'm all impatience to know."

"Sir John, my love," pursued the Widow, calmly, "has made me an offer."

"He *has*!" cried Juliana, with an expression of joy. "Oh! how glad I am to hear it! I feel so *delighted*!—I knew it would be so—I felt convinced of it. Oh!" she added, embracing her with rapture, "the intelligence deserves a thousand kisses!"

"This, my love," continued the Widow, seriously—"this, as you will perceive, accounts for all."

"No!" cried Juliana, "no, dear, it does not account for your sadness. It cannot account for that!"

"My sadness, love, springs from the fact of my being unable to accept that offer."

"Unable to accept it! What! not such an offer as that!—and from such a dear good soul, too?"

"He is indeed a dear good creature! It is that which renders my inability to meet his views so painful."

"But what inability, dear? Why are you unable to accept this offer?"

"I will, my love, briefly explain: When poor Mr. Wardle was on his death-bed, I promised that I never would marry again."

"Oh, dear!" said Juliana, with a countenance expressive of deep sorrow. "Oh, what a pity! dear me, what a pity! And that promise cannot be recalled."

"It cannot be recalled; nor must it be broken."

"Dear, dear, how unfortunate! It is of so sacred a character, too! Does Sir John know of this?"

"Yes, dear; I told him the night before we left the Hall."

"And what did he say?"

"He expressed both amazement and regret."

"And did he, dear, endeavour to prevail upon you to break that promise?"

"No, he could not in any direct manner do that; but he asked me to reflect, and I have reflected; and now he has written for my

decision. But read the letter, love : having explained thus far, there is nothing in it I wish to conceal from you now."

"Dear, what an unfortunate position!" said Juliana, who took the letter and read it carefully, and thought that she saw in the questions proposed sufficient to justify her in advising the Widow to hold the promise in a less sacred light; but she dared not do so: she thought of the solemn circumstances under which it was made, and shrank from offering any advice on the subject. "You can answer the whole of these questions in the negative—can you not, dear?" she enquired.

"All, my love; but all includes the last!—I cannot—dare not—consider myself absolved from that promise."

"Dear, dear," said Juliana, as her tears began to flow, "what a pity it was mentioned at all. Oh!" she added, fervently, "that his spirit could descend from heaven to absolve you! It would be done: in this case I feel sure it would be done."

"I feel equally sure," rejoined the Widow, "that if he had imagined for one moment that Sir John would have proposed, that promise would never have been enjoined. But it is not, my love, so much for my own sake as for the sake of Sir John that I regret this circumstance. I cannot hope to be on earth more happy than I am; but he appears to imagine that our marriage would impart additional happiness to him."

"And I, too, feel sure that it would. It would increase the happiness of both. But then that cruel promise! Oh! how sorry I am that you made it!"

"The thing is done, and cannot be revoked. I regret it certainly; for there is no man on earth, my love, whose happiness I can ever feel more anxious to promote, or who is indeed more worthy of being made happy; but I cannot—I dare not—violate that promise which I held, and still hold, to be sacred."

"Nor dare I advise you to do so. A promise made under such circumstances is of such a very solemn character. Then of course your decision will be against the marriage?"

"It must be, my love, for I dare not consent."

"I feel very, very sorry," rejoined Juliana. "I feel grieved—deeply grieved; but you cannot—I see that you must not—consent. Oh, dear! if you could but have thought at the time that Sir John might have made you an offer, what a very happy thought it would have been, inasmuch as poor dear Mr. Wardle, of course, would have said, 'This promise does not extend to him.' But the promise was made without any reserve, and, of course, cannot now be recalled. Poor Sir John! It will be a very painful thing for him. Dear, dear me, how sorry I am!"

"Now, my love," said the Widow, "I have, of course, explained this to you in strict confidence."

"Of course, dear," returned Juliana. "But I have already done very wrong: I have told Charles that I saw 'Dear Adelaide' in the letter."

"And what did he say, love?"

No. 12.

"He smiled."

"I perceive. Then let him know the rest—with this understanding, that the secret must go no farther. I do not fear him. He is, my love, a man!—he has Sir John's heart, his generosity, and his honour. And now, my love, leave me to write this decision. Charles, of course, will be impatient."

"Are you going to write it now, dear?" enquired Juliana.

"Yes, love."

"I wish that you would defer it until we return."

"Why, dear?"

"Because, as you have given me permission to explain all to Charles, I thought that he might perhaps be able to suggest some means by which you might feel yourself virtually absolved from this terrible promise."

"My mind is quite made up, my love. There stands the fact, which no earthly power can alter. I promised—solemnly promised—that I never would marry again, and that promise *must* be performed!"

"Certainly," returned Juliana. "*I* dare not advise you to break it, however ardently I may wish that it had not been made. *I* cannot see how you can do so conscientiously; still I thought that Charles might perhaps suggest something which would have the effect of convincing you that that promise was never intended to apply—and that, therefore, in reality it does not apply—to Sir John!"

"That it never was intended to apply to Sir John, I feel convinced already, my love; but that cannot convince me that it does not apply to him, seeing that no reservation was made."

"Well, it is a very lamentable thing," said Juliana, "and I know that poor Sir John will feel dreadfully grieved, for I perceive that he contemplates marrying at the same church and on the very day we have named, in the event of his receiving a favourable answer. Dear me, though, how very pleasant that would have been! But it is not—I fear that it is not—to be. I never before heard of such a cruel promise!"

"Kindness prompted it, my love, and affection urged it to be given."

"Yes, dear. I have no doubt at all about that: but it is such a *very* unfortunate case. Had you promised not to marry again within a given time—say two or three years—it would not have been so bad; but the idea of promising *never* to marry again, under any conceivable circumstances, certainly surpasses all. I'll speak, however, seriously to Charles on this subject: I'll ascertain what *his* feelings are on the point, and if I find that he does not consider that promise to be, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, so strictly sacred as you imagine, I'll get him to talk the matter over with you calmly, in order to see what can be done."

The Widow smiled sadly, and Juliana left her—with, however, this understanding, that if even she wrote her letter, she was not to send it off until Charles had been seriously consulted.

Now it was the same morning, and about the same time, that Sir John summoned George into the library, with the view of hearing his final decision on the subject of his marriage with Jane.

Sir John knew, of course, what that decision would be: his conversations with Jane had convinced him that George had made up his mind to abandon her, and that those brutal notes had been sent for the purpose of disgusting her so far as to render it in her view a matter of slight consequence whether he married her or not. Nor was George, indeed, less prepared to give, than Sir John was to receive, that decision: the three days allowed for reflection having expired, he kept at home expressly in order to show how promptly and how firmly he could decide against the pursuit of that course which he was anxious to induce Sir John to believe would, in his judgment, shock morality..

He accordingly, on being summoned, entered the library with a firm step and a countenance so impassive, that, as he tranquilly drew a chair near the table, no one could have imagined that the workings of his mind—of which the “index” was so fair—embraced ferocity, implacable hatred, and revenge.

“Well, George,” observed Sir John calmly, “I hope that you have reflected on that subject upon which, as you are aware, I am anxious now to have your decision.”

“I have,” replied George, “I have reflected: as you wished me to do so, it was of course my duty to reflect, although I felt at the time that no reflection could alter the views which I entertained then.”

“You felt this at the time; and your present impression—”

“Is,” returned George, “that those views were correct.”

“Then I am to understand your final decision to be against making this poor girl your wife.”

“That is my decision. But have *you* reflected? Have you reflected on the immorality of such a marriage?”

“I have, George: I have reflected deeply, and the result is a firm conviction that nothing *but* this marriage can palliate the immorality by which your conduct has been characterized throughout. But morality is not a word for *you* to employ! The means by which you accomplished this poor girl’s fall—your assumption of piety to aid your design—your monstrous falsehoods—your broken promises—promises which you never intended to perform, and now your heartless abandonment of her—prove that you ought to be the last man to speak of morality!”

“Is it to be understood, then,” said George, “that if a man has been weak enough to adopt an immoral course, he is therefore bound to pursue it?”

“No! I would urge you to abandon that course, and make the only reparation in your power.”

“By marrying a wanton!”

“She is no wanton, George, and you know that she is not. She is no more a wanton in my sense than you are in my sense a man. You

have by the most specious arts caused her fall, and now you call her a wanton. Having ensnared her, you charge her with having ensnared you. *You* are the victim!—*you* were seduced!—*she*, in one of your unguarded moments, triumphed over *your* innocence! But, if it were so, what necessity was there for those promises of marriage?—what necessity was there for the invention of those falsehoods? Was the existence of those ‘deeds’ gratuitously conceived? or were they imagined in order to enable her to conquer your morality? George! there is nothing manly in all this! Were you to take your full share of the blame instead of endeavouring to cast it *all* upon her, poor girl! you would act in my judgment much more like a man!”

“If,” said George, without attempting to reply to this, “If you had chosen any virtuous girl and wished me to marry her, I would have done so if even I had deemed it a sacrifice; but the idea of marrying one who has forfeited all claim to that title is so utterly repugnant to every correct feeling that if I could entertain it for one moment I should consider that I was giving direct encouragement to vice.”

“You mean,” rejoined Sir John, “that if I had chosen this poor girl before her fall, and wished you to marry her, you would have done so; but having yourself chosen her to sacrifice, and having acted towards her in a manner repugnant to every correct feeling, you cannot, now that you *have* sacrificed her, entertain the idea of acting like a man! It is, however, useless for me to attempt to inspire you with those feelings of which I have proved you to be utterly destitute: it is useless for me now to appeal to your sense of honour and of justice, because you have none. I regret this exceedingly: the reflection that I have such a son is very painful to me; but that I *have* one who really appears to take delight in proving himself to be a hypocrite—”

“I am *no* hypocrite!” exclaimed George fiercely. “I tell you distinctly that I’ll *not* marry her! *Is* there any hypocrisy in that? You talk of a sense of justice! Is it just that I should be thus denounced because—and *solely* because—I refuse to marry a cast off girl?”

“George, I cannot converse with a man in a passion.”

“I am not in a passion; but if even I were, it couldn’t excite much surprise. Why should I be thus tyrannized over? Why should I be thus trampled upon? Why should every indignity be heaped upon *me*? Am I the only man who has erred? I know that I am hated, and that by one for whom I have ever had the deepest affection. I am hated by you, and that hatred is too strong to be concealed. You would crush me—annihilate me!—I know you would! You have no more regard for my feelings than you have for those of a dog. And yet you are my father! God! that I should be so offensive in the sight of him whom Nature prompts me to revere!”

“Are you mad, George?” enquired Sir John with emotion.

“No, I am not *yet* mad, but I know not how soon you may drive

me to madness. Your treatment has become insupportable. Whom besides me do you treat in this manner? Whom else do you load with reproaches? No one!—I have to bear all! And why? Because I'll not be *forced* into a marriage with one whom you know to be impure! I'll *not* be thus forced! Were a thousand pounds suspended by every hair of her head I'd not marry her now!"

"There's an end of it," observed Sir John calmly. "I shall name the subject to you no more. I never had any desire to *force* you: my only object was to *induce* you, George, to act like an honourable man. But there's an end of it! I have heard your decision, and now I shall know how to act."

"Yes! you'll know how to act. You have talked before of acting. But how do you intend to act? What do you mean to do?"

"That is for *me* to consider," replied Sir John, who immediately rose and left the room.

"Well," thought George on being left alone, "I suppose that I have been too violent. But what was I to do? How else could I get over it? What was the use of my arguing the matter when I had neither justice nor reason on my side? I was compelled to be violent. Nothing but violence could have silenced his importunities. And now I suppose he'll begin to work against me. Well! a crisis appears to be at hand. Let it come!—but before it *can* come I must be prepared to meet it. The twentieth—the twentieth—and this is the twelfth. My mind must soon be made up, and if I be, as he says I am, destitute of all those feelings which become a man, why, so much the better!—they cannot annoy me. But caution—caution—must ever be present. The whole design must be perfect. It must be viewed in all its parts and bearings clearly: the importance of every act must be deeply considered, and the most minute circumstance carefully weighed. It must be done!—yes, it must be done!"

Dreading to dwell on the design he had conceived, and yet resolving to render that design at least perfect, he left the house and mounted his horse with the view of dining alone at one of the inns in the town.

Meanwhile Sir John, who, although quite prepared for George's adverse decision, had not been prepared for his outburst of bitterness, was endeavouring to discover whether there had been anything in his conduct towards George to justify him in supposing that he was hated.

"I am unconscious," said he, "of having treated him ill. I am unconscious of having had any desire to tyrannize over him or to trample upon him. I have certainly spoken somewhat harshly to him occasionally: but then what has compelled me to do so? Look at his proceedings!—look at his real character! I dare not dwell upon it. He is *not* justified in stating that I have treated him with unkindness, and as for hating him, God knows I have always regarded him with feelings of a character the very reverse. But some allowance must be made for the violence of his temper. He was at the time in a passion: he said he was not, but I know that he was. The

thought of this marriage upset him. Upset him! Well! I'll not now review the whole course of his conduct towards that poor girl; but, as he has clearly set his soul against the marriage, nothing more with a view to effect it can be done. I must now call on Freeman and let him know the result, and ascertain what his views are on the subject of an arrangement. I'll go now. He must, of course, be anxious to see me, and so must that poor deluded girl."

He accordingly ordered his horse at once, and rode with a sorrowful heart to Freeman's, where he saw Jane, who welcomed him warmly as usual, but with an expression of anxiety the most intense.

"Well, my dear," said Sir John, "is your father at home?"

"No, Sir John," replied Jane, "but he is on the farm. I will send for him. But pardon me," she added, with a look of apprehension, "have you not—*have* you not any news, Sir John, for me?"

"I have, my dear—I have."

"And *good* news?"

"Well, my dear, *you* may not consider it quite so good as you would wish! But send for your father, and while the man is gone, we'll talk the matter over together."

Jane immediately sent a man to let Freeman know that Sir John wished to see him; and having done so, she panted to hear that news which she felt would be either life or death to her hopes.

"Now in the first place, my dear," resumed Sir John, "I must inform you that I have endeavoured, by all the means at my command, to induce George to fulfil his promise."

"I thank you"—said Jane—"a thousand times, Sir John, I thank you! But have you not yet succeeded?"

"I have not: I have not yet succeeded."

"Have I unhappily offended him again?"

"No, my dear; no."

"Then what *can* be his objection? There is no barrier now. You have assured me—and I have felt happy in the assurance—that every obstacle has been removed. Why, then, should he hesitate? Why *should* he wish for delay?"

"He is, my dear, as fickle as the wind."

"He fickle! *He* who has taught me to believe him to be as constant as the needle to the pole!—he fickle as the wind! No, no, no—pardon me—you cannot mean that!"

"Indeed, my dear," replied Sir John, "*I do* mean it."

"But fickle, Sir John—you mean, of course, that he is not always in the same good spirits—not always free from those little annoyances which cause men to *seem* inconstant!"

"No, my dear, that is *not* what I mean: for the man who has a constant heart will, although he should appear to be as fickle as the wind, come back or veer round to the point from which he started; but he has not a constant heart—"

"Not George?"

"No, my dear. And if I were you—knowing what I do know—I'd have nothing more to do with him."

"Impossible!—You amaze me!"

"He is not worthy of you."

"Not George? Dear Sir John! you surely cannot mean that?"

"What man possessing the feelings of a man would, under the circumstances, have written those notes?"

"But they were ironical—were they not? You do not *believe* that he was in earnest?"

"No, I do not believe, because I *know* that he was."

"In earnest when he wrote them?"

"Yes, my dear; there *never* was a man more in earnest than he was then."

"But why, Sir John—pray tell me why he should treat me thus cruelly?"

"I am unable to perceive any *reason* in it!" replied Sir John, emphatically.

"But does he really hesitate—of course you say that he does—but does he in reality *refuse* to perform his solemn promise?"

"My dear girl, he does!"

"But why?—for what reason? What has induced this change? What is the cause of his refusal? What—what *have* I done?"

"You have, my dear," replied Sir John as he took her hand, while her tears gushed forth copiously, "you have, my dear, confided in his honour; you have had implicit faith in his affection and constancy, and you have been—deceived!"

"Father of Mercies!" exclaimed Jane, fervently—"pity me!—pity the weakness which induced me to believe that he was all perfection! But do you," she added, addressing Sir John, eagerly—"do you say this of your own son?"

"Truth, my dear, compels me to do so; and my sympathy for you will no longer allow me to keep you in suspense. I could have told you before—but I dared not tell you—that your hopes on this subject would never be realized: I could have told you before that you have been deceived—that he has no intention of making you his wife!—but I abstained from doing so until I perceived that your faith in his constancy had been shaken."

Jane looked at Sir John with an expression of amazement, mingled with incredulity still.

"Is there any truth in man?" she at length enquired.

"I hope so," replied Sir John; "yes, my dear, I hope so!"

"Then must there be truth in him! What! violate promises so solemnly made!—made with a heart full of piety and devotion to Him whose presence was invoked to record them as sacred—promises which were held to be holy vows, and He the attesting witness—violate *them*!—If, Sir John, you have urged him to this—"

"My dear, *can* you imagine that I *have* done so?"

"Some one has done it! That his fine sense of honour, his illimitable love, his devotion and his piety, have been paralysed by some potent influence, is clear. It is not in his *nature* to act thus, voluntarily."

"I assure you that all I could do to induce him to act like an honourable man, has been done: nay, so strongly did I urge him to perform his promise that he at length fiercely turned round upon me declaring that he would not be *forced*!"

"Forced!—Pardon me, Sir John: I beg of you to pardon me: my faith in his affection has been so firm that I might, without reflection, consider any one an enemy who would shake it; but I have reason to know that you have to me been a friend: it did not occur to me at the moment that if you had been anxious to prevent this marriage, you had it in your power to do so by simply refusing to alter those deeds."

"There were," Sir John was about to say, "no such deeds in existence;" but he abstained.

"Forgive me," she continued, "for having entertained, even for a moment, the slightest doubt of *you*; but I cannot help believing that some evil influence has prompted him to act as he has done."

"Knowing then, my dear, that he has thus acted, would it not be wise on your part to repudiate him as he repudiates you?"

"Before that can be done, I must see him: I must hear from his own lips that he repudiates me; and if I *should*, from his own lips, hear this, I feel a spirit rising within me—But no, he will not have the heart to say that! When he sees me, all his fond love will return, and we shall *yet* be happy."

Freeman now entered the room, and Jane retired; when Sir John, having greeted him cordially, said, "Freeman, I sent for you in order that you might know the decision—"

"I am prepared for it, Sir John—quite prepared for it," said Freeman; "I had no thought at all of its being otherwise. I felt sure that he would abandon her, and he has done so."

"All my anxiety," returned Sir John, "to induce him to act like an honourable man, has been construed into a desire to *force* him into the marriage."

"Force him!" echoed Freeman; "his own feelings—his own sense of justice—ought to force him. But what sense of justice can he have? He's a bad man, Sir John—a *bad* man! Have you explained this to Jane?"

"I have, Freeman; yes, I thought it useless to keep her any longer in suspense."

"Quite right: but how did she bear it?"

"Better, much better than I expected. I find that she has more spirit than I imagined she possessed."

"Her possession of that spirit, Sir John, has amazed *me*. His perfidy, however, has inspired it. Formerly she might have been said to be a *simple* girl—tranquil as an angel—gentle and passionless as a lamb—but now she can develop the nerve of an amazon! It is, Sir John, the spirit of one who feels that she has been indeed deeply wronged."

"It is well that she has this spirit, Freeman. It will tend to sustain her. The blow might have broken her heart. She, however,

still clings to him—and that with surpassing tenacity! She will not yet believe that his decision is final. She'll not even believe it to be voluntary! She ascribes it to some evil influence having paralysed his feelings, and will not be convinced that he has abandoned her until she hears him absolutely declare it!"

"No; she will not. I'm aware of it!" said Freeman. "Nor will she be convinced even then. She'll cling to her faith in his affection to the last."

"But there is no prospect, Freeman, of turning him now. I have not the slightest hope of it! I feel well assured that his decision is irrevocable, and therefore we must now consider what is to be done."

"I scarcely know, Sir John, what can be done."

"There are, as you are aware, Freeman, two courses open, and it is for you alone to choose between them. You can either bring an action for seduction against *him*, or come to some arrangement with me."

"I don't know at all what to do in the case."

"Then consult some friend—some mutual friend—say, if you please, Dr. Farquar. He knows all about this unhappy affair; and I believe him to be a strictly honourable man; consult *him*. I am content to leave it entirely to him, and will abide by his decision. You will, of course, bear in mind that if you bring your action with the view of exposing George, you will, at the same time, cause unlimited publicity to be given to that poor girl's shame; nay, she will herself have to proclaim it. Whereas, by a private arrangement, all this may be prevented—all, in fact, may be concealed. She may be sent away for a time, and that to a place in which even her name will be unknown, and on her return she may ostensibly hold the same position as that which she occupies now. All this you will consider with Dr. Farquar, who has daughters of his own, and whose sympathy and strong sense of justice will enable him to come to a correct decision."

"Sir John," said Freeman, having listened most attentively, "I have the utmost confidence in *you*. I know you to be a man of honour, and will therefore leave the case in your hands. I feel with you the inexpediency of giving publicity to an affair of this character, if it can by any reasonable means be avoided; and therefore, instead of consulting Dr. Farquar—whom I highly respect, and by whose decision I should be perfectly willing to abide—I will leave it to you, in the full conviction that you will do, under the circumstances, that which is just."

"This confidence, Freeman, shall have its effect. It is not misplaced, nor shall it be betrayed. I *will* do that which I conceive to be just, and may do more than strict justice demands. And now," he added, "what is to be done with this poor girl?"

"You spoke, Sir John, of her being sent away for a time."

"I did; and I think that that would be the best course to pursue. I know a respectable farmer in Sussex in whom you may with safety

confide. I also know his wife, a kind-hearted, motherly creature, by whom she would be treated with most affectionate tenderness. I would advise you to let her be with them. They will, I know, do all in their power to make her as comfortable as possible; and if this should meet her views, as well as your own, I'll write to them, in order that they may make every necessary preparation to receive her."

"Sir John, I am anxious to be guided by you."

"Well, you can speak to her on the subject calmly. We shall see each other again in a day or two, and you can in the interim ascertain what her feelings on this point are."

Sir John then rose; and having expressed a wish to take leave of Jane, she was called, when he begged of her in the most affectionate terms to keep up her spirits, and left.

"Well, my dear," said Freeman, when Sir John had passed the gate, "it is, I find, just as I expected!"

"It appears to be so," replied Jane; "but I'll see him! He shall tell me himself—if he *dare* to tell me!—and if he *should*, I'll pour into his ears a flood of truth which shall at once overwhelm him! His solemn invocations to heaven—his impious assumption of sanctity—his apparently pious appeals to the scriptures, in order to prove that our proceedings were sanctioned by the Most High, with his thousand blasphemies when he used to kneel and call upon the angels to record his vows and to bless our loves, shall be recalled to his memory, and that in tones which, if he have a heart at all, shall make him tremble!"

"I think, my dear," said Freeman, "that you had better not see him."

"Not see him, father!"

"No; I really would not—unless, indeed, he should call."

"Why, what have I to fear?"

"He may insult you."

"He may: but am I, after what has occurred, to *fear* this? No, my father; no. There was a time when a look from him would have subdued me, but that time is past."

"But the excitement, my dear—the mere excitement which such an interview must induce would be injurious."

"Father, I should be *firm*; but as calm as I am now."

"If I were you, my dear, I would treat him with contempt."

"I *will* do so!—but he shall know it."

"Well, my dear, well," returned Freeman; "I have only to hope that all unnecessary excitement may be avoided. Come, kiss me, and be calm. Sir John has made two propositions to me; but we'll not enter into them now: we'll talk them over quietly in the evening."

"Sir John," said Jane, "is a kind-hearted man. I only wish—but wishing is useless now."

"Be of good cheer, my love," said Freeman soothingly. "Things may even now turn out better than you imagine. For my own part,"

he added, "I congratulate you on having escaped from the perpetual tyranny of a villain."

"A villain, indeed," said Jane, as Freeman left her, "if—if my apprehensions be realized! That I must ascertain: that I must know—and the sooner I know it the better. He is generally riding in the park about this time. I'll go: I'll go now, and if I should see him, I'll demand an explanation at once."

She accordingly dressed and proceeded to the park; but was of course unable to see him, he being in the town at the time, dining alone.

Nor did he return until late in the evening, when, heated with wine, he retired to his room and gloomily dwelt on that dreadful design which he panted to carry into execution. This design, however, was not, in his foul imagination, yet perfected. He dreaded detection, and that dread hourly increased; for although he had made up his mind to do it, he could not conceive the means by which it might safely be done. His conscience he had silenced; his feelings he had deadened; his heart he had closed; and his whole soul was set upon the action: but the means of performing that action, without being detected, harassed him throughout the night.

In the morning Sir John received a letter from the Widow, and, as he felt sure that it contained her decision, he hesitated for some time to open it—fearing on the one hand and hoping on the other. He did, however, eventually summon sufficient courage to break the seal, and, having done so, he calmly read as follows:—

"MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your kind, and, to me, most interesting letter, this morning; and I beg to assure you that the questions which you have with so much delicacy proposed, have occupied my most serious thoughts. I have dwelt upon them deeply: I have looked—as far as my humble ability would allow me—at every point, and I cannot but feel highly honoured, and proud of the position I hold in your esteem. My most earnest desire, my dear Sir John, is to promote your happiness by all the means at my command. It ever has been my study to do so, and I know that you will believe me when I say that it ever shall be. The means, however, which are not at my command, I, of course, cannot employ, however strongly I may feel that, by virtue of their adoption, your happiness would be enhanced.

"Now, the questions which you have so kindly proposed are four in number; and, as they appear to me to comprehend every point of view in which the subject can be placed, I will proceed at once to answer those questions precisely as they stand:

"In the first place, then, I do *not* think that he by whom the promise was enjoined, imagined that *you* would ever make me an offer.

"Secondly, I do *not* believe that if he had imagined this, that promise would ever have been enjoined at all.

"Thirdly, I do *not* conceive, taking into consideration the high esteem in which he held you, that, if it were possible for him now to sanction our marriage, he would withhold his consent ; but—

"Fourthly, although I can answer—conscientiously answer—the preceding questions in the negative, I cannot—I must not—I dare not consider myself *absolved* from my solemn promise *never* to marry again.

"You will, dear Sir John, I know, appreciate the motives which have induced me to arrive at this conclusion : you will, I well know, feel assured that *nothing* but the strongest conviction of the sacred character of that promise could have prompted me to decline the high honour you so kindly intended to confer : my gratitude appeals to me—my heart appeals to me—my pride appeals to me—my sense of your affection appeals to me ; but that which I hold to be a sacred duty *must* notwithstanding be performed.

"I remain, dear Sir John,

"With deep affection and gratitude,

"Ever yours,

"ADELAIDE WARDLE."

"Well," said Sir John, having read this attentively, "she is right—quite right!—she is perfectly right! The promise was sacred, although I contend still that he had no right to enjoin it. However, that's settled: no more need be said about *that*. Her decision is final, and there's an end of it, of course. I cannot, however, but admire her devotion. I respect her for it: I respect her more than ever!—at the same time I more than ever regret that that solemn promise was made."

He then placed the letter in one of the drawers of the library table, and ordered his carriage, and paced the room thoughtfully until it was announced, when he entered and proceeded towards the town.

George—who was on the *qui vive*—saw him start, and immediately entered the library. He also had received a letter that morning—a letter from D'Almaine—requesting immediate payment of the amount of his I O U—namely, five-hundred pounds—and stating that he would not have applied for it on *any* account had he not lost all the money at his command.

It was not, however, in order to study or to dwell upon the contents of this letter that George entered the library: it was with the view of ascertaining whether any memoranda had been made by Sir John, having reference to the contemplated arrangement with Freeman ; and as he had keys in his possession which would unlock nearly the whole of Sir John's private drawers, he proceeded to investigate, and found the Widow's letter!

This he read—he read it twice, in order to understand it perfectly, and the result was—a sneer.

"Oh," said he, contemptuously, "she'll not marry again. But what of that?" he added, with a scowl. "She must be pensioned!—

and *will* be pensioned—on the estate! Will she?—*will* she? We'll see about that."

His search was resumed, but nothing could be found having reference to Jane.

"He has," said he, "I know, been at work upon something, and may have it with him. Where is he gone now? Why, in all probability to his solicitor, and that with instructions to alter his will, so that he may leave me a comparative beggar! I'll follow him. I shall find his carriage *somewhere* about the town, and if I find it, then all doubt will be at an end."

Having carefully replaced the Widow's letter, he ordered his horse, and proceeded at a somewhat rapid pace across the park; but he had scarcely passed the Lodge than he saw Jane approaching! He, however, took no apparent notice, and would have dashed past her; but as she, perceiving his design, went into the road, and stood immediately before him, he stopped.

"What now?" he demanded, with an expression of ferocity.

"What do you want with *me*?"

"George!" said Jane, tremulously.

"What do you *want*? You know my decision, and by that I shall abide."

"Hear me!"

"You received my last note, I presume?"

"Yes, George, yes; but you surely could not mean—"

"That which I said there I meant, and mean still!"

"Will you hear me?"

"No! Nor will I be detained."

"But George!—George!" she exclaimed, with energy, as she attempted to seize the bridle—"you *shall* hear me!"

George on the instant struck his spurs into the horse, and with a withering look of decision, left her.

For some moments Jane stood motionless; but he was no sooner lost to her view than she turned, and heaving a deep sigh, exclaimed, "And is it so! Is this he who was the centre of my hopes—my fond heart's preceptor—the idol of my soul! Monster! But he yet shall hear me! He shall not always thus escape. I'll haunt him until I have told him all, and made his false heart tremble!"

She wept not—no, she could not weep: her indignation bore her up, and she turned towards home with an aching heart, but without a single tear.

Having entered the town, George found Sir John's carriage at the door of his solicitor; and feeling then perfectly convinced that Sir John was there for the purpose of giving instructions for the draught of a fresh will, he proceeded to the inn at which he had dined the previous day, with the view of deciding there upon the means by which his dreadful design should be accomplished.

"Now,"—thought he, as he sat alone with a bottle of sherry before him—"now all is clear. A fresh will is to be made, and that not only on the eve of this marriage, but when his Adelaide is to be

pensioned; and this girl is to be pensioned, while he is panting to wreak his revenge upon me! It must not be done! It *shall* not be done! Am I to be reduced to penury—held up to the scorn and contempt of the world—pointed at as the pitiably poor elder brother, and despised as all in this world are despised, who possess not the means of *commanding* respect—when one blow, or one touch of the trigger, would prevent it? What have I to fear if this be done, without exciting suspicion? What is his life to me? What but a prolific source of insult, contumely, and apprehension? The longer he lives the more I shall be injured, while his death now would give me wealth and consequent power! Four-fifths of his estate belong to me; and the will which secures them to me is now to be superseded! Why, who but a fool would suffer this when he is in possession of the power to prevent it? Who but an idiot *would* stand tamely by and see himself struck down from affluence to poverty, when he might *avert* the blow by simply extending his arm! Am I such an idiot? No! His death to me is wealth—his life degradation! And what is his life? What is it to me, smarting as I am under a deep sense of injury? But if it were not so, what is the life of one man more than that of another? If you are met by one on the road who demands your purse, what is your first impulse? Why, to shoot him through the head; and if you do so what remorse do you feel? None. If, then, no remorse is felt for the death of a man who would deprive you of a paltry sum of money, the loss of which would be unfelt, which you would give for a toy or spend for wine in an hour, what remorse should be felt for the death of a man who seeks to deprive you of all you can hope for in the world, and thus to reduce you to a state of destitution? This estate is worth seventy or eighty thousand pounds. I would shoot any man on the instant if he stopped me on the road and attempted to rob me of a mere five-pound note, and yet I hesitate to do the same thing to the man who seeks to deprive me of seventy or eighty thousand. Why, what an anomaly is this! Why should remorse be felt in the one case more than in the other? Because you are legally authorized to kill in the one and not in the other. Does the law, then, create our feelings? Are our feelings the mere creatures of the law? It must be so. We kill a man for *illegally* attempting to rob us, and think but little of it, because the law sanctions the act. We kill a man for *legally* attempting to rob us, and tremble because the law does *not* sanction the act. The law, then, *is* the creator of our feelings. They depend for existence *upon* the law; and all that we hear about conscience and remorse is ascribable solely to the *dread* of the law. To act without exciting suspicion, therefore, is the only real difficulty in a case of this description to be surmounted. To act without exciting suspicion—now stop—how can that be done now? Why, the very fact of his having given instructions for this fresh will in order to deprive me of all to which by nature I am entitled, will, in the event of his death, cause suspicion to fall at once upon me. He is no common man, and therefore the investigation would be of

no common character; and even if it were, that alone would be sufficient. It would be seen—those instructions would prove—that we were not on very affectionate terms; and as I should appear to be the only man with whom he was not friendly, I should be fixed upon as the only man who could or would take away his life! There's the grand point: it is not his death, it is the law! Am I, then, to abandon the design? Stay—stay! A happy thought; yes, indeed a happy thought! Strange that it should not have occurred to me before. The very thing. Nothing could have been more fortunate; and to happen, too, at this very time. Now weigh it—weigh it calmly—don't force the construction: look strictly to the natural result. He has proposed to the Widow. Very well. It is clear, from the questions that she has answered, that he was anxious to make her his wife. Very good. Now doubtless the rest of his letter was written in a most affectionate strain. Well, I'll take that for granted, but nothing of which I have no absolute knowledge must enter into my calculations now. He was anxious to have her, and she rejected him!—that is on record: her letter, of course, will prove that she rejected him. Well! He received the intelligence this morning—mark, this very morning! What, then, if he should happen to be found dead to-night, with a pistol in his right hand? What would be the inference? What *could* be the inference? What could his death be ascribed to? What but to temporary insanity, induced by the fact of his having been rejected! How else could a jury decide, with this evidence before them? They *could* bring no other verdict in! and suspicion would fall upon no one then—all would be free from the slightest taint. We know that if it be not strictly true, it is proverbial, or, at all events, conventionally understood, that the amative passions of a man of his age amount to a species of infatuation, to which insanity is nearly allied. Well, then, will it not be taken for granted that he was so infatuated with her that when he received the intelligence of his being rejected, he became so depressed that self-destruction was the result? Why of *course* it will! He dies to-night!”

Having with a brutal scowl arrived at this dreadful decision, he hastily finished his wine and left the inn; and, as he rode slowly out of the town, he considered how he should act at the Hall before the horrible deed was done.

“I'll dine with him to-day,” said he at length; “it will not be a very agreeable *tête-à-tête*, but it will tend to shut up the servants' mouths, which I might perhaps otherwise open. He'll not say much to me, I dare say: on the subject of that girl he has promised to say no more, and I shall say as little on that or any other subject to him. Yes, I'll dine with him—I'd rather not, of course; but I must—unless, indeed, I see a chance of bringing him down, when, of course, he will dine no more. That infernal D'Almaine!—*he* must write for his money, and just at this time, too. Well! But stop,” he added on reaching the road which he almost invariably took on his way home; “I may as well go round. I may be waylaid again by that cursed girl. She seems

desperate—and her object may be to have a pop at *me*. I shouldn't be astonished if she were to try it. I wish she would!—I'd soon get rid of *her*! Still, perhaps, I had better go round."

He then turned off and leaped one of the park fences, and, as he approached the Hall, Corney ran in almost breathless haste towards him and cried, "Mr. George! Sir! *Have* you seen a madman?"

"A madman?" said George with a careless air. "There are madmen enough in this sinful world. All men are mad sometimes."

"Yes, sir—I know, sir; but have you seen a real one—a real insane one—a regular right on lunatic of a madman?"

"What do you mean?"

"A madman, sir—a real deranged madman, which runs about and bites every mortal flesh he sees! Have you seen him, sir?"

"No."

"Then you're lucky."

"Now, what *do* you mean?"

"Why, sir, one of that specie has just broke loose—cut clean away from Dr. Briggs's—vanished like a mortal spirit somewhere, sir, with the Doctor's double-barrelled gun under his arm!"

"Who told you of this?"

"The Doctor's been here, sir, and all his men—sweating like bullocks, and running here and there, sir, as if they'd all turned mad themselves. Sir John, too, he's in a *fine* way about it! He sent for the keepers, and called the grooms, and had every horse in the stable mounted, and sent some one way and some another—I *never* see such a job in *my* life before!"

"He escaped from Dr. Briggs's, did you not say?"

"Yes, sir, he cut with a double-barrelled gun."

"Do you know what sort of man he is?"

"A fine, tall, gentlemanly man, sir, they said, which has been there no time hardly."

"Lejeune!" thought George "He has made his escape, and that without the aid of my four-and-twenty pounders. Which way did the Doctor go?" he enquired.

"Straight through the park, sir, along with Sir John. The Doctor says he's sure he's concealed about here somewhere."

"Well, then," said George, "I suppose that I must follow them."

"Don't, sir!" cried Corney—"for goodness sake, don't! I would not advise you, by no means, to go. Now do stop at home: he may do you a mischief. Remember, sir, he's got the Doctor's double-barrelled gun, and it's loaded—I'll be bound to say up to the muzzle. Besides, sir—now only, sir, just look here—I'm the only mortal man about the premises; and if he should come, sir, while I am alone, the consequences can't be accounted for. Don't go, sir—pray don't. Be advised by me. If he *should* let fly at you, he'll bring you down like life—and that you'd not be a bit the better for, I know."

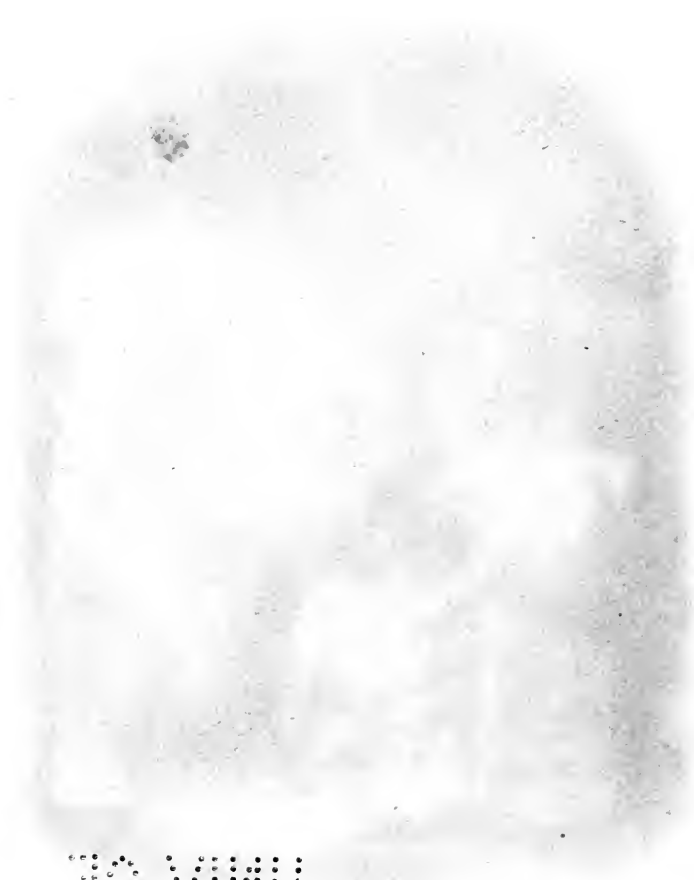
George, apparently regardless of this extremely touching appeal, continued to look round the park with the view of catching a glimpse



The DEED. !



~The Conscience Stricken~



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CONGRESS





Illustration by J. H. P.

~The Intelligence~



~ The Suppliant ~

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of some one; and when at length Sir John and the Doctor appeared in the distance, he struck spurs into his horse, and left Corney alone.

"George," said Sir John, as he approached, "Lejeune has made his escape."

"How long has he been gone?" enquired George.

"I missed him about an hour ago," replied the Doctor, "and my impression is that he's concealed somewhere near."

"You have sent men off, I find."

"In every direction."

"Well, let us ride round: we may meet with him here."

"If you see him, be cautious; he has my gun with him."

"Loaded?"

"Doubtless: he took flasks and all."

"But how did he escape?"

"One of my stupid men who had been cleaning the gun, incautiously left it in sight of Lejeune, who, taking advantage of his absence, entered the room, passed through the house, and got over the gate."

"He may have taken the road to London," said George.

"If so," returned the Doctor, "my men are sure to catch him."

"I hope so—I hope so," observed Sir John. "If he should reach there, and call at his brother's house in Charles's absence, the consequences may be fearful."

"He has not taken that road. He's not far off. We shall find him."

"A sad job—a very sad job," said Sir John, who led the way into one of the plantations; but scarcely had he done so when Richard walked deliberately up to the Hall.

Corney, who had been fearfully on the look out, saw him from one of the upper windows cross the lawn, and, conceiving that politeness would have an agreeable effect, he thus addressed him:—

"Go away, my good gentleman; this isn't the house; you've made a mistake; it's the other, farther on."

Richard looked up indignantly on being thus addressed, and said with an air of authority, "Some wine, fellow!—give me some wine!"

"We don't sell it here: we don't, indeed," replied Corney. "You'll get it at the other house, sir, capital!"

"I'll have it here!" cried Richard.

"But there's nobody at home!"

"Are not *you* at home?"

Well, Corney felt strongly at the time that he could not, with any degree of propriety, deny himself; but then what was to be done?

"Instantly come down!" cried Richard, fiercely; "or," he added, pointing to his gun, "I'll bring you down!"

This was said in a tone so commanding that Corney was really about to obey, when a pleasant thought struck him, and he said in a voice of surpassing gentleness, "Put the gun down, sir: please, put it down—there's a good gentleman! put the gun down."

"Put the gun down! Why?"

"I can't bear the sight of a gun,—I can't, indeed, sir: it sends me into fits."

"*I* never surrender my arms. Now, sir! Do you hear?"

"*Will* you wait till I open the door?"

"Be quick, then!—I'm off to my dominions."

"That'll do," said Corney confidentially to himself, as he left the window—"that'll do out and out! If he'll only just wait till *I* open the door, he'll oblige me, inasmuch as he don't catch me opening of it at all."

He then ran down stairs, and on reaching the servants' hall he cried, "Sarah, Ann, Charlotte, Cook, all of you—he's here!"

"Gracious! Who?" demanded the whole of them at once.

"The madman!"

"The madman?—Here?"

"Run for your lives!"

"Where are we to run to?"

"Anywhere!"

Sarah thought of clinging to Corney; Cook thought of running up into her bedroom and hiding beneath the clothes; Ann thought of the beer-cellar; Susan thought of the wood-house; while Charlotte thought of fainting; but all, without giving expression to their thoughts, stood and stared at each other bewildered.

"Hark!" cried Corney, with an electric effect, as Richard entered the house, having found that by simply turning the handle of the outer door, he could open it. "Hark! he's now in the house! Let's all cut into the shrubbery behind. If he should come that way, we can dodge him about. He *may* get into the maze, and if he should, he'll be right enough there—come along!"

He led the way, and the women instinctively followed; while Richard, having entered the room into which he had previously been shown, and finding Sir John's lunch set out, went to work with an air of peculiar satisfaction.

"What's he like?" enquired Sarah, when she and the rest had established themselves in what they deemed, under the circumstances, an eligible situation.

"What's he like? Why I'll tell you what he's like," replied Corney. "Did you ever see a regular rhinoceros?—because if you didn't, he's for all the world like one: large grey whiskers, like a brace of big bushes in a snow storm! eyes like a couple of coke furnaces! teeth like the tusks of the wild boar of the wilderness! a nose like the trunk of a Chinese elephant! hands like the claws of a Bengal tiger, and stands, I should say, about thirteen foot high!"

"Gracious!" cried Sarah. "Lor! if he should come here!"

"Is he married?" enquired Cook.

"Well, I should think he is," replied Corney. "He looks quite wild enough for a married man."

"Wild enough! What do you mean by that?"

"Why, he looks like a man driven wild by his wife."

"Well," interrupted Ann, "I don't envy his wife. I wouldn't have such a monster for all I could see. I like a tallish man—that I certainly do—but thirteen foot high is out of all kind of conscience! I should like to see him too—at a respectable distance."

"You'd faint," returned Corney; "you'd go into fits."

"I wonder what he's up to now?" said Cook.

"He don't know himself," replied Corney; "and that's where the philosophic part of the business is! You see," he added, assuming the air of an oracle, "when a man's mad, he's right on crazy. He's insane—a madman is—regular insane. His intellects is what you may call deranged. His upper story's conglomerated: his roof isn't sound: it's either cracked or got a tile off somewhere. He hasn't his right change. He's a lunatic—an insane man is—a real original lunatic, and that of such dimensions that he's out of his mind, just the same as a grocer's out of tea when he hasn't got any in stock."

"Yes, exactly," said Sarah. "Go on, Cornelius; I like to hear you talk, because there allus sure to be suffen in what you say."

"Well," pursued Corney, "as I was expostriculating, the intellects of his mind is turned topsy-turvy, and he knows no more about anything than nothing. He's compos mempos, which is the French for no how. He's a maniac—an universal ninnyhammer—which means that his brains is in such fits that he's no control over their transmigration. If he bites a piece out of your arm, he thinks it's a bit of a buttock of beef; if he swallows a slice of your cheek, he thinks it's part of the breast of a chicken. Very well. Now suppose I was mad, I should, of course, be in a state of know-nothingness; and suppose I was promoted to that state, what should I do? What should I do! Why anything in life. I should kiss every girl in the universal world, and knock down every man that came across me. I should eat and drink just all I liked—take champagne instead of beer, and put up for a member of Parliament. It isn't of *much* use for a man in this world to know nothing; but if I knew nothing I should do all sorts of unaccountable things, because I should be an unaccountable being. If I were mad, *wouldn't* I have a game! In the first place I'd kiss you all regular round, and then go on a quiet expedition of pleasure. I'd potter George clean off his horse, to begin with. I should like to do that above a bit!"

"But why?" enquired Ann. "He's a nice, quiet, pious man enough."

"So he may be," replied Corney, "very nice, and quiet, and particular pious as well; but what would that signify then to me? His piosity wouldn't weigh an ounce then in my scale! I'd just as soon pitch him off his horse as I'd marry you; but I must, of course, be mad to do either."

Ann curled her lip with the view of expressing contempt, while Sarah smiled, and really felt delighted.

"Hark!" cried Cook, as Sir John and George approached, having scoured the plantations, examined the hedges, given notice to every farmer on the estate, and left the Doctor to ascertain if any intelligence had reached home—"he's coming—he's coming—he's certainly coming!"

"Hold your tongue—hold your tongue! There's a stir," said Corney, "but it sounds like the stir of horses. Hark! There's the bell!"

"And Sir John's bell!" said Cook.

"Yes, we know it's Sir John's bell—that we know; but we don't know who rang it. The madman can pull a rope as well as Sir John, and the bell would as soon ring for one as the other; it would make no difference at all to the bell!"

"There it is again!" cried Cook; "you'd better go."

"Well, we'll go if you like, for I think it's Sir John."

"*We* go! Are you a man?—afraid to go without us!"

"Afraid! Pooh! What do you mean? Afraid! There we see the ingratitude of the sex! My object is to protect you! Suppose you were attacked in my absence, why you'd all of you go right off into fits without any protection at all! No! I'll stick to you *like* a man: ungrateful as you are, I'll protect you still!"

"Cornelius!" shouted Sir John at this moment, apprehensive that something very serious had happened,—"*Cornelius!*"

"Here, Sir John—here!" cried Corney, whose breast Sir John's appearance reinspired with courage. "We're here!"

"Why," demanded Sir John, as he approached the shrubbery, "what is the meaning of all this?"

"The madman!" cried Corney—"the madman, Sir John!"

"Have you seen him?"

"Oh! awful, Sir John! He's been here, and he's here now."

"Where?"

"In the house."

"Run round and tell George: you'll find him in the stable: tell him to come here to me."

"Shall I call to him?"

"No, make no noise."

"But I dussent go alone if you'd give me the world! I'll go anywhere *with* you, Sir John; but—"

"Then we'll go together."

Corney looked at the maids with an expression which proved that he had at that time a strong prejudice in favour of remaining in their society; but he, notwithstanding, followed Sir John into the stable, where, in the presence of George, he felt a little better.

"George," said Sir John, "Richard's now in the house. How are we to proceed?"

"In the house!" cried George. "Why how long has he been there?"

"He came very soon after you left," replied Corney. "I was at one of the windows, and he wanted some wine, and threatened to shoot me if I didn't give him some: so I ran down stairs and warned the maids, and when we heard him enter the house, we all ran into the shrubbery together."

"You should have left them there," said George, "and come in search of us. We should then have had the Doctor with us. However, we must do the best we can as it is."

"How do you propose to act?" enquired Sir John.

"Why," replied George, "we must first ascertain which room he is in, and then his position will teach us how to act. If he should have the gun by his side, I must pounce upon him before he can raise

it: if not, I shall go very quietly to work, and while we are shaking hands together, secure him."

"Well, for Heaven's sake be cautious, George—pray be cautious. If he *should* have the gun in his hand, retire. We *can* mount and follow him, if he should escape."

"We shall be able to manage, no doubt," said George, "without running much risk. But the moment I seize him, you must come to my aid."

This was understood, and they entered the house and searched every room, but without success: no Richard Lejeune could be found. It was, however, perfectly manifest that he had been into one of the front parlours, and helped himself to some wine and part of a cold chicken which Corney had duly set out for Sir John; but beyond this, no trace of him could be discovered.

"It is strange," observed George, "that we saw nothing of him as we returned. The Doctor is right: he is still somewhere near."

"Which way, sir, is it to his dominions?" enquired Corney.

"His dominions?"

"Yes, sir; he said he was off to his dominions."

"He would have been in his dominions by this time," said George, "if you had done that which you ought to have done."

"Frightened as I was, sir, I didn't know what to do: that's the truth, sir,—and nothing but the truth."

"Well," said Sir John, "it's useless talking now of what might have been done. I am very, very sorry that we were not here."

"It's all for the best, Sir John, 'pend upon that," observed Corney, with increased boldness. "If you had been here, and had gone to that door, he might have brought you down like a bird! Such an eye for a shot! and such whiskers!—my patience! There, if—"

"You had better tell the girls that he has left," said Sir John, and Corney, who perceived that his eloquence was not very highly appreciated, instantly bowed, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DEED!

ABOUT an hour after Richard's retreat from the Hall—that is to say about five o'clock—the keepers and grooms whom Sir John had despatched, returned from their fruitless expedition; and when they had put up their horses, Sir John—who was pacing the lawn in a state of great anxiety—sent them all in to have some refreshment.

George was in his own room at the time, and with a bottle of brandy before him, gloomily encouraging the most revolting thoughts.

"Action!" he at length exclaimed. "Action! It must be done. The injuries he is anxious to inflict upon me justify it: my own dearest interests demand it! If that lunatic *had* brought him down, he

would have saved me the trouble; but as it is, by my hand he must fall! Now, then, to be a mere machine. No maudlin sympathy—no sense of feeling—neither fear nor affection must interpose now! Through the head, or through the heart? Which is the quicker process? The head I can see—the heart I cannot. The head, then, be it! Now,” he continued, as Sir John left the lawn, and slowly and thoughtfully entered a glade cut through the adjoining plantation for a view—“now—now is the time! I’ll go—I’ll converse with him—and the first *chance*!—The spot is just below the ear, and he shall afterwards grasp the weapon! All is still. There is no one near—no one to be seen for miles round, and the servants are regaling themselves in the hall. What!” he added, as on looking round again he saw some one approaching the right of the glade, “why, there’s the very man!—that is Lejeune!—and he has his gun with him. Stop! Why of course! Instead of the pistols, take a gun! I can then go to the left of the glade unseen, and, having *done* the deed, run back and give the alarm! *He* will be held to be the criminal then, and, being mad, what will it matter to him? The very thing!—The charge: be quick, but firm!”

Having set aside the pistols, which he had previously loaded, and which were known to belong to Sir John, he proceeded to load his gun—putting a full charge and a half into each barrel—and drank some more brandy, and stealthily descended and listened; and heard the servants laughing merrily at Corney’s extravagant description of Lejeune, when, feeling more than ever secure, he made at once for the left of the glade, in which Sir John was in deep meditation. He passed him—noiselessly and unseen—and went up to a hedge near a narrow path which led to the Hall, and stopped until Sir John came immediately opposite the spot on which he stood, when with a deadly aim he fired, and his father on the instant fell! A shriek—a piercing shriek was heard;—but George—although it chilled his blood—hastily stuck his gun into the hedge, and ran with all possible speed to the Hall, where he gave the alarm with vehemence.

“Murder! Murder! Murder!” he cried. “My father has been shot—in the glade! I saw him fall!”

In an instant the whole of the men rose, and rushed with him into the glade, down which they saw Richard Lejeune, in an evident state of alarm, running.

“There he is!” cried George. “That’s the man! Follow *me*!” and he ran with the rest until Richard turned and fired, when George stopped, staggered, and fell.

This, however, did not at all check the pursuit. The men followed Richard, who had started off again, and who, on being caught, was on the instant overpowered.

“Murderer!” cried one of them indignantly, as he wrested the gun from the “Murderer’s” hands.

“Murderer!” echoed Richard. “No; I have done nothing contrary to the articles of war. You have disarmed me, and I am your prisoner, but I have a right to claim *all* the consideration due to my exalted rank.”

"Don't hurt him," said Corney, "he's mad. That's him: his mind knows nothing about what he's done."

Having pinioned his arms and grasped him securely, they led him to the spot where George was still lying, and found that he had not been wounded seriously. This inspired them at once with the hope that Sir John had escaped a mortal wound; but when they found that he had ceased to breathe, the whole of them stood and wept. The stoutest heart was melted then; the strongest trembled with emotion. They could not speak, grief choked their utterance. He—so kind, so good a man—their friend, their benefactor—he who had been like a father to them—*murdered*! Had Richard Lejeune *not* been insane, they would have torn him limb from limb.

The violence of the first ebullition of grief having somewhat subsided, Sir John was tenderly borne to the Hall. George, supported by one of the grooms, followed; and Richard was brought in the custody of the rest.

"Go," said George, tremulously, "go for Dr. Farquar. My father may yet be restored."

Two of the grooms immediately mounted and galloped off—one to summon Dr. Farquar and the other Dr. Briggs; both of whom by accident they met near the park, and who, on hearing what had occurred, struck their spurs into their horses, and flew with the grooms to the Hall.

Sir John was their first care, but he was no more; and having ascertained this beyond all doubt, they turned their attention to George.

"Are you sure," enquired George, with an expression of intensity, "are you sure my father is dead?"

"Unhappily," replied Dr. Farquar, "he has for some time ceased to breathe."

"This is agony, indeed!" cried George, while the tears, which he could always command, flowed freely.

"It is," said Dr. Farquar, "a most dreadful occurrence. You, too, are wounded, are you not?"

"Oh! slightly, slightly; but that's of no moment."

"Still," said Dr. Briggs, "we must examine the wound. Where is it?"

"My arm," said George, faintly, "my arm is lacerated slightly—nothing more."

They examined his arm, and found that some stray shot had touched it; but although the sleeve of his shirt was saturated with blood, the wounds inflicted were very superficial.

"There's nothing in this," said Dr. Farquar, "and yet I understand you fell."

"I did fall," replied George, cautiously, "but that I ascribe chiefly to exhaustion."

"Aye, well," said Dr. Briggs; "that was, under the circumstances, natural. Did you see Sir John fall?"

"I did."

"And did you see poor Lejeune fire at him?"

"No; hearing the report and seeing my father fall, I instantly gave the alarm."

"Lamentable, lamentable!—very, very lamentable!" exclaimed Dr. Briggs; "very, very."

"I must," said George, with an expression of deep emotion, "I must go at once and communicate this sad intelligence to Charles."

"No," said Dr. Farquar, "although this wound is of very slight importance, you are not in a fit state to go."

"Whom, then, can I send?"

"I'll go; I'll go at once."

"You are, indeed, a friend. Take one of our servants with you—take Cornelius, he knows the house. Believe me, Dr. Farquar," he added, "I feel grateful to you—very, very grateful."

The bell was rung, and Corney was desired to accompany Dr. Farquar, who left immediately, when Dr. Briggs proceeded to dress George's arm: and shortly afterwards, accompanied by two servants, took Richard Lejeune back in a carriage to the asylum.

"Now," thought George, on being left alone, "I am master here—absolute master. The estate is mine, and nothing could have been better managed. No suspicion now can possibly fall upon me. But that shriek; *whence* did that proceed? Could it have been fancy? It might have been, and yet it seemed to pierce my very heart. I have heard of screech-owls; but there are no screech-owls here. I never saw one; I never heard one; nor did I ever hear of one being either seen or heard here. It *must* have been the imagination, and yet, until I heard *that*, I was firm. I'll think no *more* of it. If I give way to these fantasies *now*, I may for ever be their slave. It *was* fancy. It could have been nothing else. I'll *have* it nothing else; and yet it had a fearful effect. Coward! Fool! Having done a deed like this, I must have a heart as impervious as adamant, or the rest of my life must be wretched. I must despise all childish fears—treat withering apprehension with contempt, and be a man. What is it after all? What does it amount to? One man dead. Well; suppose he was my father? Was he not about to injure me? Why, I was, in justice to myself, bound to do it. I did it merely in my own defence. *Who's* there?" he cried with a convulsive start, as one of the servants knocked gently at the door.

The servant entered to announce that dinner was ready.

"Dinner," said George, tremulously, "dinner? Alas! I have had *my* dinner. I cannot eat; no, James, no; I cannot eat. Bring me some wine," he added. "I am faint."

The wine was brought and the servant withdrew, when George drank glass after glass with avidity, and rose and paced the room, and went to the window, from which he saw carriages, gigs, and horsemen approaching in all directions,—the intelligence of the murder having been, as if by virtue of electricity, communicated to all around.

He rang the bell, and when the servant entered, he said, in mournful tones and apparently with deep emotion, "James, there are carriages

and horsemen approaching; I, of course, cannot be seen. You will know what to say. You can tell them that I am wounded; and, although not dangerously, I am too much afflicted both in body and mind to see any one now."

James bowed in silence and retired; and George, as Sir John's friends approached, watched them narrowly unseen. They were all deeply affected, for Sir John was beloved by them all; and as James received them with mournful respect on the lawn, they surrounded him and listened to his version of the circumstances connected with the dreadful event, and wept. He then pointed to the glade, and as they appeared to express a wish to view the spot on which their dear friend fell, George, as James led them towards it, rushed into his room with the view of watching their movements so near the hedge into which he had hastily thrust his gun.

"Fool! idiot!" he exclaimed, "to conceal it just there. Was there ever such a *dolt*. They say that a man who does a deed like this is sure to commit some monstrous act of folly, and this is mine. There! there! they go directly up to the hedge! Why, of course, I might have been sure that all round *that* spot would be closely examined. Oh!" he added, in an agony of suspense, "if it should be discovered! The gun is mine; it will be instantly known to be mine; my name is engraved on it. Stop! they leave the hedge. They go back—to the spot. No, no—they have *not* found it. Oh! this dread of detection itself will cause the detection dreaded. They return, and for the present I am safe. But is this your nerve? Is this your courage? Is this your lion-heart? For shame. And yet *had* they found it,—why, suspicion would have been on the instant engendered, and how could I have accounted for its being there? I could *not*—stop—I might—yes, I certainly might. Richard Lejeune was in the house alone. Who then could tell that he did not come up into this very room, and having taken the gun with him, placed it there. His madness would account for the eccentricity of his carrying *two* guns. Still, it is better—much better as it is; for although nothing could have been absolutely *proved*—it might have excited suspicion. I'll go as soon as the coast is clear and bring it away, when *that* will be settled. I *can* conceal it beneath my cloak, which I can wear now without its being deemed extraordinary. It must not remain there."

The party then slowly returned to the lawn, and having conversed together for some time in groups, they retraced their steps through the park; when George, who had watched them until they were no longer to be seen, put on his cloak, with the view of recovering the gun, which had already been a source of intense apprehension.

On looking round, however, he saw other friends approaching, and his walk to the hedge was in consequence deferred; indeed, they kept constantly calling until it became quite dark, when he put on his cloak again, left the house, and slowly paced the lawn.

James, who happened to hear him go out, ran up to the door, and said, "Is that you, sir?"

"Yes, James, yes," replied George, faintly. "Do not disturb

my meditations. My soul can be relieved now by solitude alone."

"Beg pardon, sir," returned James, respectfully, and, of course, withdrew at once from the door.

"Now," thought George, "while I am supposed to be meditating here, I'll secure that which inspired me with so much alarm, and then all dread of detection will be at an end."

Well, this was, under the circumstances, a great desideratum, and the sooner it was accomplished the better; and yet he continued to pace the lawn. The night, though dark, was calm. The wind was hushed—no sound was heard—a solemn silence reigned around. *Why* then did he continue to pace the lawn? *Why* did he not go to the hedge?

He *dared* not go; he did not dare to *stir* beyond the lawn.

"I wish," thought he, as his fainting heart quivered,—“I wish that my rights could have been by some other means secured: that no necessity had existed for this—murder. Murder is a dreadful thing, even to contemplate, but a far more dreadful thing is it to rest upon a man's conscience. Perish the *name* of conscience! It is but a bugbear, although it frights the world. I'll have no more of it. Then why remain here? Why not go at once and remove the only thing by which suspicion can by any possibility be created? What have I to fear? I fear no living man—the dead are powerless. Then why not go? Superstition enthrals me still: but—I *will* go. And yet perhaps, I may as well defer it till the morning. No one, of course, can find it to-night. There's not the slightest chance of that. There's no necessity for going to-night. The morning—early in the morning—will do. Yes, I'll let it remain till the morning. And why? Because—disguise it as you may—you *dare* not go to-night. And this is your courage! *Strong*-minded man! Well, am I alone in this respect? Imagination will shake the courage of the mightiest. Men who will fearlessly face the substance of any living thing, quail before a shadow, even when they *know* that shadow to be the mere creature of the imagination. I will not go to-night. My nerves are unstrung. I do not feel well. I have surely had sufficient excitement for one day. A man is not always the same—he is not always firm. Place any man in a position to which he has been unaccustomed, and he will not feel at ease, even though he fear nothing. *I* have nothing to fear—nothing tangible to fear; but I'll not go to-night. There's no necessity for going. Early in the morning will do just as well.

He then re-entered the house, and ordered coffee, and put an unusually large quantity of brandy into every cup he drank; and as this had but little effect, he had some hot brandy and water, resolved on drowning, if possible, every sense of that fear which continued to haunt his imagination. This was, however, unavailing. The brandy, instead of inspiring him with courage, tended to increase his terror. The more he drank the more horrible his apprehensions became.

Midnight approached, and he was absolutely afraid to move.

He felt as if bound to the chair on which he sat. The thought of leaving the room made him shudder. The idea of going to bed was too frightful to dwell upon then.

He rang the bell, and the sound even of that at the moment startled him—his nerves had become so relaxed.

"James," said he faintly, when the servant had entered, "my brother, for whom Dr. Farquar has gone, may in an hour or two be here: and as I do not feel at all inclined to sleep, I'll not go to bed. I'll sit up until they arrive."

"I will," said James, "with pleasure, sir, sit up, instead of you."

"No, James; you can go to bed. I am, of course, anxious to see him the very moment he arrives, and if we should want any assistance I'll call you. You can make up the fire, and bring some hot water: they will feel faint, doubtless, after their journey."

"Very good, sir," said James, who proceeded to obey these instructions, and then added, "I beg pardon, sir, but as you expect Mr. Charles so soon, would it not be better for me to sit up as well? I shall then be ready to do any thing that may be wanted. I'll rather sit up, if you please."

"Very well," replied George, who now dreaded the idea of being left up alone, "then do so. Take some brandy with you, and mix it for yourself."

"Thank you, sir," replied James, who poured out a wineglassful of brandy, and left the room.

George, who knew, of course, that the doctor could not possibly return with Charles before *six* o'clock, and who had said that they might arrive in an hour or two, solely in order to induce the servant to believe that their anticipated arrival was the cause of his sitting up, then proceeded to mix more brandy and water; but, although he drank again and again lustily, he no sooner found himself alone again than his horrible apprehensions returned with renewed strength to torture him.

He took up a book; but that was useless: his eyes wandered over the pages in vain. His mind would *not* be diverted: his own imagination was too strong to yield to the influence of the imagination of another.

He closed the book and drank again, and stared at the fire, and endeavoured to dwell upon that which he had previously conceived to be his justification; but that availed him nothing then: the anguish of remorse still tortured him, and instead of any justification appearing, the parricide viewed his naked guilt with horror!

It was then that he saw the fallacy of supposing that a man may murder, and yet feel no remorse: it was then that he found that it was *not* the dread of detection, or the fear of the law alone, that struck the hearts and tortured the imaginations of men; but the overwhelming consciousness of guilt—that consciousness of which the poignancy has caused thousands upon thousands to confess their crimes and to give themselves freely up to temporal justice—preferring chains, dungeons, execrations, and an ignominious death, to the moral tortures of a guilty soul.

Again and again he drank, and tried to shake his horrors off.

"Am I," said he in an energetic whisper—"Am I to be eternally superstition's slave? What is it but gross superstition after all? Away with it! despise it! bid defiance to its power!—Great God!" he exclaimed, and sank back appalled; for at the moment, his imagination created the figure of his father standing before him, and pointing to Heaven!

He glared at the spectre with eyes starting from their sockets, while every feature—with the exception of his livid lips, which quivered—was pale with horror, and rigid as marble.

There stood the figure, motionless; and George continued to glare until the paroxysm of terror had somewhat subsided, when his features relaxed, and he spoke again.

"Would that it were a reality," said he. "Would that it were *not* a mere phantom—the creature of an overwrought imagination; but it is—I know it to be no more, and yet I am appalled!"

The figure moved, and bared its breast—from which blood appeared to issue; and having pointed to George, raised its hand again to Heaven.

"I cannot pray," said George, tremulously, "nor can I weep; but if I could, neither prayers nor tears would reanimate him now! I'll look no *more*!" he added, closing his eyes; but as he fancied that he felt a cold hand upon his head, he uttered a wild exclamation of terror, fell upon his knees before the opposite chair, and buried his face in his hands.

"Did you call, sir?" enquired James, who at this moment entered, having fancied, as he heard a noise, that he might have been summoned.

"No, James—no," replied George, faintly, "I did not call—except upon Him to whom all hearts are open, and all desires known!"

"I beg pardon, sir, for interrupting you," returned James, to whom the fact of George being in an attitude of devotion did not appear at all extraordinary, seeing that he had acquired the reputation of being an exceedingly pious man.

"Stay," said George, rising, as James was about to retire; "this lamentable occurrence has completely unmanned me."

"It is indeed dreadful to think about," said James. "But what must be the feelings of him, sir, that did it?"

"You are aware," returned George after a pause, during which he struggled to conceal the sudden effect of this question—"of course you are aware that Mr. Lejeune is insane, and therefore unconscious of what he has done."

"But have madmen no sense of feeling, sir?"

"Yes; but they have not those feelings of remorse which afflict the souls of men who are *held* to be sane. But let us say no more on this dreadful subject. You can take a chair, James, and remain here until my brother comes. I feel very faint, and very unhappy."

"No wonder at that, sir; Sir John was such a *good* man!"

"He was, as you observe, James; he was a good man. Mix some brandy and water for me, James; my spirits are very much depressed."

"No doubt, sir: they must be," said James, who went directly to the kettle, which he had placed beside the fire, and found it empty. "Dear me, sir," he added, "I beg pardon, but I thought I had filled it nearly full."

"I have been drinking a large quantity of warm water," returned George. "I have felt an intolerable thirst."

Well, James thought that he must have been thirsty indeed; but the idea of a man drinking so much boiling water interfered to some extent with his notions of taste. Having, however, a kettle on the fire he had just left, he went at once to replenish, and on his return mixed a glass for George which could not be strictly called strong. George rectified this, and then desired James to help himself, which he did; and having taken his seat on the edge of a chair, said, "I hope you'll excuse me for being so bold, sir, but is this here Mr. Lejeune, sir, any relation to Mr. Lejeune who was down here a short time ago?"

"His brother," replied George—"his brother. He was formerly a man of great wealth, the loss of some portion of which drove him mad,—another proof of the folly and wickedness of men setting their souls upon sublunary things—that is to say, upon the things of this world."

"It isn't the richest that's always the happiest, sir."

"No, James, it is not indeed," returned George, who now opened a book and endeavoured to read; and as this was held by James to be a signal for silence, nothing more was said until morning dawned; when George, impatient to recover his gun, rose, and desired James to bring his hat and cloak.

"I'll walk," said he; "the morning air will brace me. While I am gone, you can be preparing breakfast. My brother must shortly arrive."

He left the house and walked slowly round the lawn, and then passed the gate and looked round the park, when, as nobody could be seen, he went through the plantation towards the hedge in which he had deposited the only thing which he imagined *could*, by any possibility, create suspicion.

He reached the hedge and saw the spot; and then looked round again anxiously, when, feeling convinced that all was secure, he searched the place into which he had thrust the gun, and found, to his horror, that it was not there!

"Gone!" he exclaimed with a most intense expression of terror. "Gone! Then I am lost!"

Again he searched: he searched all round, although he knew the precise spot in which he had concealed it; but no: no gun was there!

"Good God!" he cried, "what's to be done?—what's to be *done*? The gun is mine—it is known to be mine—and he who has found it will denounce me! I have but one chance of escape—but *one* chance!—that of inducing those who may suspect me to believe that Lejeune, having been in the house alone, took the gun, and concealed it there. I must not, however, be seen about here: I must not even approach the spot. Now," he added, as he turned towards the Hall, "firmness alone can save me!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INTELLIGENCE.

DR. FARQUAR, accompanied by Corney, reached town about half-past eleven, and found that Charles had taken Juliana and the Widow to one of the theatres, and had not yet returned. This had, however, been scarcely ascertained, when a carriage containing the happy party drew up; and as the Widow was the first to see the post-horses steaming near the door, she exclaimed with an expression of pleasurable surprise, "Sir John has arrived!—I feel sure of it! See! why there stands Cornelius!"

They alighted, and hastened to greet Sir John, but found Dr. Farquar in the hall.

"I am happy to see you in town," said the Widow, as the Doctor took her hand, and endeavoured to smile. "But Sir John," she added, "has he not come up with you?"

"No; I brought one of his servants with me."

"But he is, I hope, well?"

"Well, at present," replied the Doctor; "he cannot be said to be in good health. The fact is, my dear madam, he has had an attack."

"An attack! Dear me!—but I hope of no serious nature?"

"The worst is over now. He was quite free from pain when I left him."

"It was not an attack of paralysis, I hope?" said Charles.

"Oh, no!" replied the Doctor—"no such thing. Still I thought I'd call, in order to ascertain if you felt at all disposed to return with me."

"When do you think of returning?" enquired Charles.

"I must return immediately."

"What! to-night?"

"To-night."

"Dear me!" cried the Widow; "you surely cannot mean that?"

"I have patients whom I must attend to early in the morning."

"Well," said Charles, who had watched his countenance narrowly, "if it must be so, why there's an end of it. You must, however, stop and have supper with us."

"I really cannot stop more than half an hour."

"Oh! it shall be ready immediately," said the Widow, who directed one of the servants to take Corney into the kitchen, and then went up stairs with Juliana.

"Now," said Charles, on being left with the Doctor, "what is the meaning of this? I perceive, by the expression of your countenance, that something serious has occurred; and I beg of you at once to let me know what it is?"

"Charles," replied the Doctor, earnestly, "your father has met with a serious accident, and I am here expressly in order to take you

back with me. I beg of you to ask me no more questions now: I'll explain all to you on the road."

"Is it very, very serious?" enquired Charles.

"It *is* serious—very; but let us not dwell upon it now."

"Well," said Charles, tremulously, "the sooner we start the better. Come up and have some supper, and then we'll be off."

"We need not be in any very extraordinary haste," said the Doctor, with the view of subduing Charles's manifest alarm. "But the ladies, of course, must know no more than I have told them."

"Of course not," returned Charles, who led him immediately into one of the drawing-rooms, in which they found supper already set out.

Juliana and the Widow, having hastily thrown off their cloaks, at once joined them; but they had scarcely done so when the Widow perceived tears spring into the eyes of Charles, who made every possible effort to conceal them; and being thus impressed with the conviction that Sir John's "attack" was of a far more serious character than the Doctor would have them imagine, she begged to be excused for "one moment," went into another room, and, having rung the bell, requested one of the servants to show Cornelius up.

"There is something more in this," said the Widow, "than a slight attack of illness. I feel convinced of it. I fear that something *very* serious has occurred. Cornelius," she added, when Corney had been shown into the room, "I may depend upon you—I know that I may: I am therefore most anxious for you to state to me exactly how Sir John was attacked."

"Then you've heard of the attack, ma'am?" enquired Corney, who had been instructed by Dr. Farquar not to mention the circumstance to Mr. Lejeune's servants.

"I have," replied the Widow; "but I wish to hear from you, Cornelius, how he was attacked."

"Well, ma'am," said Corney, "then I'll tell you. You must know, ma'am, that Mr. Lejeune, the madman—the brother of this Mr. Lejeune here—"

"Mr. Lejeune a madman!" exclaimed the Widow.

"Regular insane, ma'am!—right on raving!"

"You amaze me! But—well, go on, Cornelius—go on!"

"Well, ma'am, he broke loose yesterday from Dr. Briggs's, with a double-barrelled gun."

"From Dr. Briggs's? Well?—yes—well?"

"Well, ma'am, he cut across the country, and they after him like life; and while they were gone, he came up to the Hall—"

"And attacked Sir John?"

"No, ma'am; Sir John was out then."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed the Widow, who now began to think that the escape of Richard Lejeune *alone* had caused Sir John's supposed illness. "But what do you mean by the attack?" she added. "You can tell me all the rest another time: come to that at once, Cornelius—come to that."

"That's the most dreadful of the whole," replied Corney.

"Dreadful!" cried the Widow, with the most intense anxiety.

"Dreadful, indeed!" said Corney, tremulously, as the big tears rolled down his cheeks; "for as poor Sir John was walking alone, this madman went up and shot him *dead*!"

The Widow gave a convulsive start, uttered a piercing scream, and fainted.

Corney rang the bell with violence; but the scream had been heard by Juliana, Dr. Farquar, and Charles, the whole of whom instantly rushed into the room, and found the Widow in Corney's arms.

Having assisted in placing her on the couch, the Doctor looked at Corney fiercely, and presently drew him aside and enquired if he had been foolish enough to explain all.

"Why, sir," replied Corney, "I certainly did; but she told me you'd told her about the attack."

"The attack, man!" whispered the Doctor, indignantly. "You ought to have said nothing about it. Say no more."

Corney bowed, and the Doctor returned to the couch, at which Juliana, assisted by her maid, was endeavouring to restore the Widow with the most affectionate solicitude.

"Will you do me the favour," said the Doctor at length—perceiving that the Widow was about to revive—"Will you do me the favour to retire for a few moments?"

Charles, with Juliana and her maid, withdrew, but Corney remained in the room; and when the Widow had been restored to a state of consciousness, she fixed her eyes upon the Doctor, and said, "Tell me—pray tell me—if that which I have heard is true? Is he—is he *dead*?"

"My dear madam," replied the Doctor, soothingly, "I know you to possess a strong mind, and although this intelligence has been communicated rather too abruptly, I feel that you have sufficient Christian fortitude to bear up against the lamentable loss of our friend. He is, alas! no more. He is in another and a better world; and, although the heart must grieve for the loss of so good—so just a man, religion teaches resignation to His will."

The Widow shed tears of agony, and offered up a silent prayer.

"And now, my dear madam," continued the Doctor after a pause, during which he struggled in vain to check his emotion, "let me beg of you to conceal—at least, for the present—the fact of Richard Lejeune being the cause of this calamity. You are, of course, aware that neither Mr. nor Miss Lejeune have the slightest knowledge of his being insane; if, therefore, this were communicated to them, coupled with the fact of his having been the cause of their dear friend's death, the double shock would be dreadful indeed. I need not, however, dwell upon this with the view of impressing its importance upon *you*. You know well how to prepare them for that of which they must necessarily become cognizant soon."

"I will act as you have suggested," observed the Widow, faintly. "I was about to beg of you to allow me to return with you and Charles; but as I perceive that under all the afflicting circumstances

it would be uncharitable to leave them, I will remain. But why return to-night? As, unhappily, all is over, why not defer the journey until the morning?"

"I will do so," replied the Doctor. "Cornelius, tell the men to put up their horses, and be at the door at six in the morning precisely. Stop," he added, "I'll first speak to Charles:" and, having opened the folding doors, found Charles and Juliana—both of whom now felt convinced that Sir John was dead—in tears.

"Charles," said he, "I think of deferring our journey till the morning."

"If," returned Charles, mournfully—"if it be as I fear that it is, I see no necessity for our returning to-night."

The Doctor repeated his instructions to Corney, and when Juliana had rejoined the Widow, he proceeded to explain all to Charles.

For the announcement of Sir John's *death* Charles was prepared; but on being told *how* he fell, and that he had fallen by the hand of Richard Lejeune, he gave vent to a flood of tears, and became convulsed with agony.

The Doctor, after a pause, then proceeded to describe how Richard was secured; and when he had stated that *George* had been shot, Charles exclaimed, "Horror upon horror! Poor George? What! is *he* dead too?"

"No," replied the Doctor. "He is scarcely wounded. His arm was slightly grazed by the shot; but he fell from exhaustion."

"Thank God for that!" cried Charles—"thank God for that! But oh! what a tragedy is this! Nor will it end here. When the circumstances come to the knowledge of Lejeune, another life will be lost!"

"Let us hope not—*let us hope not!*" said the Doctor. "Mrs. Wardle, in our absence, will prepare him for the blow; and I have every confidence in her judgment."

"Then she knows all?"

"Cornelius explained all to her."

"There again the blow falls heavily! It was but the other day that my poor father sent her an offer of marriage—"

"Indeed!"

"And although she declined," pursued Charles,—"*having promised that she never would marry again—they were firmly united by the bonds of pure affection.*"

"I always thought that he had a great affection for her."

"And therefore it is that I explain it to you, although it need no longer remain a secret."

Juliana and the Widow now re-entered the room, with the view of taking leave for the night; but neither could speak: their hearts were too full. Charles embraced Juliana with the utmost tenderness, and pressed and kissed the Widow's hand; but all were silent, with the exception of the Doctor, and even he merely said, "Good night: good night."

It was two before all had retired to rest, but neither Charles, Juliana,
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nor the Widow could sleep. Even Corney was kept awake for more than an hour, for having evidently incurred the displeasure of Dr. Farquar: he entered into a minute examination of the circumstances, with the view of ascertaining whether, in his calm judgment, he in reality deserved the Doctor's censure or not.

"Now," said he, very quietly, "I'll put myself at once upon trial, and see what the verdict will be. In the first place, the Doctor told me not to say anything about it to any of Mr. Lejeune's servants. Very well: I *have* not said anything about it to any of Mr. Lejeune's servants. Mrs. Wardle can't be called one of Mr. Lejeune's servants. Very well, then: I, of course, obeyed orders. But even suppose he had told me not to say a word to anybody about it? He *didn't* do that: but suppose he had. Mrs. Wardle has me up, and says, 'Cornelius, how was Sir John attacked?' Why, wouldn't anybody naturally suppose that she had heard of that attack? Why, of course!—I told her the truth—I told her it was done so and so—and because she faints, my feelings are to be wounded! Why, what was I to do? What could I do? If I'd told her, when she asked me how it was done, I didn't know, I should have told a falsehood; because I did know: If I'd told her I wouldn't tell her, that wouldn't have been respectful; and if I'd said I'd been told not to tell her, she'd have wheedled it out of me somehow! For my part, I think that I did the very thing that was correct, and Dr. Farquar had no more right to hurt my feelings than I have to hurt anybody else's feelings, without just cause or impediment."

Having arrived at this conclusion, and dwelt upon its justice, he fell asleep; and it appeared to him that he had not slept more than ten minutes when at half-past five he was aroused. He had, however, no time then to think about this. He rose on the instant, and having dressed himself, found that the whole establishment was stirring, and that the Widow, Juliana, Charles, and the Doctor, were then at breakfast. He therefore made the most of the time that he had; but before he became half satisfied, the postchaise dashed up to the door.

Charles and the Doctor rose immediately on its arrival, and when they had—almost in silence—taken leave of Juliana and the Widow, they mournfully entered the chaise, and started.

The Doctor had the previous evening ordered a relay for every stage, and as the horses had been kept ready, in expectation of his return, they reached the Hall before twelve o'clock, and found George in a state of almost helpless dejection.

"My brother!" said he tremulously, as Charles entered the room in which he had been sitting, with his haggard face buried in his hands, "this is indeed a sad meeting. But," he added tremulously, as the tears gushed from his eyes, "we must bear it like Christians, Charles—we must bear it like Christians!"

Charles was too deeply affected to speak. He grasped his brother's trembling hand, and wept in silence until the Doctor gently intimated the necessity for making some arrangements, when he said, "I must leave it entirely to George."

"I feel unequal to the task," said George. "I must, under these afflicting circumstances, beg of some kind friend to undertake the management."

"Whom would you like to depute?" enquired the Doctor.

"I fear that in naming *you*," replied George, "I should be taxing your friendship too much."

"Not at all," returned the Doctor. "Not at all."

"If you *would* undertake the sad office, we should both, I am sure, feel exceedingly grateful."

At this moment one of the servants entered, and informed George that a man had brought a note which he had been desired to deliver into his hands alone.

"Who is the man?" enquired George.

"One of Mr. Freeman's men," replied the servant.

"Tell him that I cannot attend to anything now."

"Oh! you had better *see* the man," said the Doctor, who feared that something serious had happened to Jane. "I know Freeman so well, that I am sure he would not trouble you under the circumstances if his communication were not of great importance."

George left the room and saw the man, who delivered the following note:—

"SIR,

"Come to me immediately.

"JANE FREEMAN."

"Tell the person," said George, having glanced at the note—"tell the person who directed you to bring this to me, that her impertinence, under the circumstances, is monstrous."

"Very good, sir," returned the man, bowing most respectfully; "but I have another note."

"Take it back, then," said George. "I'll not read it. I am amazed that Miss Freeman has no more feeling."

"I beg pardon, sir," rejoined the man with great humility; "but Miss Jane told me, sir, to say, that if even you sent no answer, you had better read it."

"*Better* read it! Why, what is the meaning of this insolence?"

"I humbly beg of you to look at it, sir, because Miss Jane told me it was of consequence."

George indignantly took the note, and read:—

"SIR,

"I have your gun.

"JANE FREEMAN."

The start and violent tremor which the reading of this occasioned, caused the bearer to stare with astonishment.

"I hope, sir," said he, "you don't blame me for bringing it!"

"No, no, my my good man," replied George. "No, no, no!"

"I only obeyed orders, sir."

"I know. You're quite right. Take no notice of me. This dread-

ful occurrence has rendered me so nervous that the slightest thing produces a shock. Take this for your trouble," he added, giving the man half-a-crown, "and say that I will attend to it certainly."

"The man bowed respectfully and left, when George went up to his room, and exclaimed, "*She* has got the gun, and I am lost! It has fallen into the hands of my greatest enemy! But how came it in her possession? That I must at once ascertain. I must, of course, account for its being found there, by stating that Lejeune, on being left in the house alone, must have taken it. But how came she to find it?—and if she did not find it, who did? Her father, perhaps!—he found it; and it could not have fallen into hands more ready to crush me. And yet some temporizing, perhaps, is contemplated. He will not denounce me at once. No! If I will but consent to marry *her*, nothing will be said about the gun. I see it—yes, I see it clearly! but I'll set him at defiance! But—that shriek—*could* that have proceeded from her? No, no, no! that was a shriek of the imagination. I am convinced of it—perfectly convinced. Some one has taken the gun to her—probably the man who brought the note! That I must learn. I must see her at once. No time is to be lost, for this suspense is dreadful. Courage! Remember your life is at stake, therefore banish all fear, and be firm."

He then descended and ordered his horse, and on entering the room in which Charles and the Doctor had been conversing, the Doctor drew him aside, and said, with a look of anxiety, "Has anything of importance occurred?"

"Anything of importance?" repeated George.

"Aye, at Freeman's?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"I merely asked because I imagined that something might have happened."

"I have no knowledge of anything having happened. His daughter certainly sent me a note to say that she wished to see me immediately; but I don't see how I can, with propriety, leave."

"Go to her. Something has occurred, I feel sure."

"Well, I am anxious to be guided by you."

"This is, of course, *entre nous*," said the Doctor. "You understand. Go."

"I will," returned George, who left the room, mounted his horse, and rode hastily to Freeman's.

Jane saw him pass through the gate; but instead of flying as usual to welcome him with every demonstration of heartfelt joy, she remained firmly seated until he entered the room, when she moved coldly to him, and pointed to a chair.

"I have," said he, assuming a stern expression, "received two notes from you, Miss Freeman: one stating that you wished to see me, and the other informing me that you have my gun."

"Well, sir?" returned Jane, firmly.

"Well, I wish, of course, to know where it was found, and who found it."

"It was found, sir, in a hedge!—near—very near the spot on which poor Sir John was murdered."

"In a hedge?"

"Yes—in a hedge!"

"Who found it?"

"No matter. It *was* found, and I have it."

"No matter? Let me tell you, Miss Freeman, that it *does* matter! He who found it will have to give evidence to that effect. Mr. Lejeune, who was for some time in the house alone, took that gun, and having unhappily accomplished the dreadful deed, concealed it."

"Indeed!" said Jane, with a look of contempt. "Was it really so?"

"Of course! Who else could have concealed it there. I missed it almost immediately, and felt sure that it was the weapon which caused my poor father's death."

"And so it was!"

"How is it possible for you to know that?"

"That is the question. How is it possible for me to know that? We may assume, I suppose, that both barrels were loaded?"

"I know that they were. I loaded them myself."

"When?"

"Some days ago."

"Do you generally keep loaded guns in the house?"

"Always. But where is the gun?"

"I have it in my possession."

"Then produce it."

"No! It is here, and here it shall remain."

"But I insist upon its being delivered up!"

"So you may; but it will *not* be delivered up to you."

"Why what is the meaning of this?" demanded George, who endeavoured to assume an expression of firmness, although he trembled violently. "What does it mean?"

"It means, sir, that as your gun is in *my* possession, in my possession it shall remain, until the ministers of the law call upon me to produce it."

"The ministers of the law! I call upon you to produce it."

"Then it will not be produced."

"But I must and *will* have it!" cried George with vehemence.

"You perceive," said Jane, calmly, as she drew a brace of pistols from her bosom—"you perceive that I am prepared for any violence you may offer."

"Why what can this mean?" asked George, struck with amazement. "Prepared for violence! Did I ever assail you with violence?"

"No: but being conscious of your having the heart to do so, I thought it quite right to be prepared."

"Will you do me the favour, Miss Freeman, to explain?"

"What explanation can you want? Mr. Lejeune brought the gun from the Hall!—of course he brought it!—*you* did not bring it! He

brutally murdered your father!—*you* did not murder your father? He then thrust the gun into the hedge!—*you* did not thrust the gun into the hedge? But,” she added, with an appalling expression of intensity, “did Mr. Lejeune hear a *scream* at the time?”

George, on the instant, started convulsively, and *looked* at her with an aspect of mingled terror and amazement.

“A scream!” said he, at length. “Whose scream?”

“Mine!” replied Jane, with energy. “*Mine!* Murderer!—parricide! *I* saw it all! *I* saw you fire! *I* saw you conceal the gun!—and while you were running to give the alarm, *I* secured it!”

George, struck with horror, glared at her and trembled.

“How came I there?” she continued. “I’ll tell you. *I* went in order to make your false heart bleed!—to recall to your memory the violated vows—”

“At present,” said George, “on that subject say no more. You were there at the time, you say?”

“I was!”

“And you saw me fire?”

“I did.”

“And will denounce me?”

“No!” replied Jane. “Live!”

“Hush!” said George, as he turned towards the door. “Do not speak so loud, and I’ll tell you why I did it. See that there is no one listening. See!”

Jane went to the door and opened it, but there was no one near,

“You spoke,” he continued, “of making my heart bleed, and you were going to speak of what *you* deem violated vows. Now listen! Why did I do this deed? I did it to escape tyranny. For whose sake was it done? For yours!”

“It is false!”

“No, Jane; no!—it is *not* false! It was done for you, and for you alone!”

“I’ll *not* believe it!”

“Had a thousand fathers opposed me, as he did, my love for you was sufficiently strong to cause me to destroy them all. While he lived, I could not marry without sacrificing my birthright.”

“Why, Sir John himself told me that every obstacle had been removed.”

“Those deeds are in existence still.”

“Can you produce them?”

“Yes.”

“Then do so. I believe there are no such deeds, and that Sir John, instead of opposing the marriage, tried to promote it by all the means in his power!”

“He pretended to do so to you.”

“Did he not give you three days to consider? and did you not, at the expiration of those three days, declare that you would not be forced?”

“Forced!” exclaimed George, making an effort to smile. “Forced!”

Forced to marry her upon whom I had set my soul ! Is there nothing too ridiculous for you to believe ? He told you so : now did he not ?”

“He did.”

“Of course ; and your credulity is wonderful. Forced to marry you, when the dearest object of my life has been to secure you ! *Forced indeed !* I am amazed that a strong-minded creature like you should for a moment have given credence to anything so monstrous. What was the whole course of my conduct towards you up to the period at which I was unhappily compelled to assume that tone which was foreign to my nature ? Was it not kind, affectionate, confiding ? Did I not treat you with the utmost tenderness ? Could any man have been more devoted to a woman than I was to you ? Have I not frequently left brilliant parties at the Hall and elsewhere to sit calmly by your side ? Have I not abandoned magnificent circles in order to enjoy your sweet society ? Have I not, moreover, sworn to protect you—sworn to love and to cherish you eternally ?—and have I not reiterated those vows of eternal constancy before High Heaven ? How then, *can* you believe anything so preposterous as the existence of a wish on my part to desert you ? Is it not contrary to my general character ? Is it not contrary to all that you know of me ? It is true I might have married you in defiance of my father ; but if I had done so, what would have been the consequence ? This—I should have been a comparative beggar ! The whole of the estate would have reverted to Charles, and we should have been almost penniless. *Could* I, under those circumstances, marry ? No ! I would not plunge you into an abyss of wretchedness : nor would I throw myself into that pit of poverty in which men pursue their tortuous courses like vipers, struggling to sustain life by *any* means, regardless of every feeling—of every principle of honour. If I could not place you in a position of independence : if I could not keep you—not only in the style to which you have been accustomed, but in absolute affluence—I would not marry you at all. I saw no chance of being able to do this during *his* life, and as it was imperative that *he*—the only obstacle to our marriage—should be removed, and that at once, seeing that in a short time your shame would be proclaimed to the world—I removed that obstacle, and now all is clear.”

“I feel,” said Jane, with an expression of firmness, “that I ought not to listen to you at all. But although you have the serpent’s tongue, it shall not abuse my judgment. Do you know this hand ?” she added, showing him the first note he sent her.

“I do,” replied George ; “It is mine.”

“And this ?” she continued, pointing to the second.

“That also is mine. Both were written by me.”

“You here address me coldly as ‘Miss Freeman,’ and call upon me to repent for having betrayed you into sin !”

“I have done so.”

“And here you address me indignantly as ‘Woman !’ and tell me to trouble you no more. You speak of my ‘indelicate importunities’ and ‘characteristic boldness.’ You state that morality must ever be a

bar to such a marriage as that which I did then contemplate—that such a marriage must be hateful in the sight of God and man—and that if I entertained the remotest thought of such a marriage, I was to repudiate that thought as you repudiated me!”

“True,” said George, calmly; “I *have* written all this and more!”

“How, then, can you reconcile these brutal expressions with your solemn vows of eternal constancy?”

“I have in my possession,” replied George, a note signed ‘Jane Freeman,’ in which you repudiate *me*, and state that all correspondence between us must cease.”

“That note, sir, was written by your direction!”

“And my notes were written by *his* direction!”

“May heaven forgive you!” exclaimed Jane firmly; “May heaven forgive you!”

“I say that his influence *alone* caused me to write those notes!”

“I’ll not believe it!”

“Not believe it?”

“No!”

“Is it—can it be conceivable that I should ever have written such notes as those voluntarily?”

“Yes!”

“Why the thing is absurd on the very face of it! How can I prove my sincerity?”

“Your *sincerity*, sir, has been sufficiently proved!”

“No—not yet. Will you bring it to the test? Let me prove it by marrying you immediately after the funeral.”

“What!—I marry *you*—now? I will use your own words and say repudiate the thought as I repudiate you!”

“You employ these words, but I feel that you cannot mean that which they imply.”

“I mean that which they imply as sincerely, sir, as you did when they were used by you.”

“I did *not* mean that I had repudiated you.”

“Then, sir, you stand self-convicted of falsehood!—for your words when I met you on the road were ‘You know my decision, and by that I shall abide,’ —‘that which I said there I meant, and mean still!’”

“That was because I expected every moment that my father would overtake me.”

“How could you expect that, when you *knew* that he had gone before? Besides, what did you say to the man whom I sent to deliver those notes to you this morning? When you had read the first, in which I requested you to call, did you not demand to know the meaning of my insolence? And what induced you to alter your tone? Your love for me?—your eternal constancy? Was it not the announcement that your gun was in my possession? And would you have come at all had you not been prompted to do so by the fear that I should exercise the power which I now possess of consigning you to the scaffold? I know that you would not!—and yet you now seek to

induce me to believe that you are, and ever have been, a pattern of constancy and devotion! Hypocrite!—hypocrite!—monstrous hypocrite! You would marry me now!—yes!—and thus you would prove your sincerity! I believe you to be sincere in this. I believe that you would now make me your wife—notwithstanding morality must ever be a bar to such a marriage!—notwithstanding such a marriage must be hateful in the sight of God and man! I believe that you would do this!—I do not for one moment doubt your sincerity! But rather than marry a murderer—Let your eyes flash as they may!”—she added, as he darted a look of ferocity at her, “you perceive that I am prepared for any emergency!—Offer the slightest violence—*approach* me—and you are a dead man!”

“My dearest love—”

“I’ll not,” cried Jane, “be thus addressed now by you.”

“I have no desire to offer any violence!”

“If I were weak enough to become your wife, how long should I live? I know that my life is in danger now!”

“No, Jane—no, no—no such thing! You torture me with these suspicions! If it be your intention to denounce me, do so at once.”

“I know not,” replied Jane calmly; “I know not what I may eventually do, but at present I *cannot* denounce the father of my child.”

“Then confide in him!”

“Never again.”

“Is the fact of my having fired the fatal shot known to any one besides yourself?”

“No! I *could* produce collateral evidence if I pleased, but I alone saw you commit the dreadful deed.”

“Have you not told your father!”

“I have not. If *he* knew of it, he would denounce you on the instant! Recollect! No innocent blood shall be shed!—no innocent man shall suffer for this! He who is supposed to be the murderer is, I understand, a lunatic. He must on that ground be acquitted or—you must be convicted. Let that be clearly understood.”

“Jane,” said George, as he sank on his knee before her, “you see me here a suppliant! Have mercy!—yes, I crave mercy of you—of you who once so fondly loved me. Let not that love be turned to hate! I’ll prove to you that it was to secure affluence for you, and you alone, that this deed was done. I’ll prove to you—if you will but give me time—that however much appearances may now be against me, I had only your happiness at heart. I now leave you: I leave you, in the full conviction that you will *not* denounce me, and with the hope that Heaven will so influence you as to induce you yet to be mine!”

“Never!” cried Jane, with energy. “Never!”

“Reflect—I beg of you to reflect. Despise not him who will now have more reason than ever to be devoted to you!—despise not him who has placed both his soul and his body in jeopardy in order to secure independence for you!—despise, oh! despise not the father

of your child ! Reflect, Jane, reflect. The estate is now mine, and you can be the envied mistress of it. I will make any settlement you may please to suggest. I will place two-thirds of the whole at your absolute disposal. Be assured that all I *can* do to promote your happiness, shall be done. We can go at once to London : we can there be married privately and return : and with the exception of your father, no soul here need know that we were not married months ago. It is not life that I crave so much as your love, which I can now repay with all that can render life brilliant ! If you should not desire to remain here, we'll go abroad, where we can live in a style of magnificence. Your father can go with us, of course, and remain with us. Think of these things, Jane : think of them seriously. I will see you in the morning and hear your decision."

"Hear my decision now !"

"No, no!" cried George. "Defer it till the morning. Do not decide hastily—pray, do not. Believe me I will be to you all that a husband should be, and all that I possess, Jane, shall be at your command. We have vowed to pass through life together—to have each other for better for worse—and that mutual vow is registered in Heaven, in whose sight we are already one. Reflect upon this, and let me beg of you not to decide hastily. And now," he added, "if even it *be* for the last time—which Heaven forbid!—let me embrace you!"

"No!" cried Jane firmly. "Stand off!"

"I must obey," said George, assuming an expression of humility. "I must, henceforward, act in obedience to your will. But shut not your heart against me!" he added, calling tears—which he shed copiously—to his assistance, "pray—pray shut not your heart against me. To grant me life, and take from me all that can make life endurable, were torture the most refined. What were life to me, Jane, without your love?—what but one continued round of misery? Pity me!—you have a compassionate heart, pity and forgive me. I leave you now with a broken spirit, and an almost broken heart; but as you hope for mercy, be merciful to me!"

Jane, although George had been apparently convulsed with agony, remained unmoved until he had left, when she gave free vent to a passionate flood of tears.

"Now," thought George, having passed the gate, "there are two courses open before me, and one of them *must* be pursued : either I must marry her, or she must follow him ! If I marry her, I deprive her at once of the power of bearing witness against me, seeing that in a case of this kind the law will not allow a wife to give evidence against her husband. If I do not marry her, it will not only be dangerous to allow her to live, but dangerous to compass her death ! Marriage is therefore the preferable course, if even there should subsequently exist the necessity for adopting the other as well. But will she now consent to this marriage ? I think that she will, although I had no conception of her having such a nerve as that which she developed this morning. Her firmness is amazing!—it certainly amazed me ! I expected *tears* as well as reproaches, but I find that she has the spirit of

an amazon! We shall see to-morrow how she will act. It is clear that she will not yet denounce me, although she may eventually do so; and if even she should not, she will keep me in a state of torturing suspense. But if the worst *should* come to the worst—if even she should denounce me, could I not easily and effectively ascribe her denunciation to malice? I seduced and then abandoned her. This could be proved; would not the charge, then, at once be believed to have sprung from the spirit of revenge? Why, of course! And yet the gun—she has that in her possession, and would produce it. Well, could I not say that I left it in her possession? and would the statement of my having done so appear extraordinary? No! But the collateral evidence of which she speaks!—what is that? Some one, probably, saw her take the gun home. Well, might she not have taken it out, with the view of being *seen* to bring it home? It is clear that she alone saw me *commit* the deed, and that, therefore, her evidence must be totally unsupported. Still, although I were not convicted, the fact of the accusation being made public, ought to be avoided if possible; for many would believe her, and it would not do for me to be even suspected. No, I must marry her. If I do not, it will be utterly impossible for me to feel, even for a moment, secure. What necessity may prompt me to do after marriage, I need not dwell upon now: the marriage must be consummated; and, notwithstanding her manifest reluctance, I feel quite convinced that the temptations I have offered are far too strong to be resisted by her.”

On his return to the Hall, George found Dr. Farquar in the library alone. Having, in the most friendly spirit, undertaken to arrange all the preliminaries for the funeral, he had been writing to various tradesmen; and when the notes had been despatched, he enquired of George if anything had happened at Freeman’s.

“No,” replied George. “Jane was anxious to ascertain from me the full particulars of this sad event.”

“Very natural,” said the Doctor. “Of course you explained all to her?”

“I did.”

“I’m glad of it—very glad. She is an affectionate girl, and it will give me much pleasure to hear of a reconciliation.”

“Well,” returned George, “I must marry her.”

“I am delighted to hear you say so. I know that she has reposed the utmost confidence in you, and it would be lamentable indeed if that confidence were betrayed. I know her well: I have known her from her infancy, and I do not know a more amiable girl. That which has occurred, and of which, of course, you know that I am cognizant, may still be concealed from the world; and I most sincerely hope that it will be concealed.”

“I am sure,” returned George, “that I am anxious to conceal it; but how can it be effectually done now?”

“By a strictly private marriage every difficulty might be surmounted: and so deep an interest do I feel in the fate of that poor girl, that I should really have great pleasure in arranging such a marriage.”

"It would, as you observe, have to be strictly private."

"Under the circumstances, of course! But I would undertake to arrange that."

"But I know not whether she would consent to such a marriage."

"Will you depute me to obtain her consent?"

"I will: for I'll marry her at once, provided all that has occurred be *forgiven*, if not forgotten."

"Very well. What has occurred cannot now be revoked, but it may be buried in oblivion. In doing this, you will act like a man of honour: indeed—you will excuse me for speaking so freely on the subject—I conceive it to be, under the circumstances, the only honourable course you can pursue."

"I think so myself: I have, indeed, always thought so; but although my poor father, in your presence, and in the presence of others, *appeared* to wish me to marry her, such was not in reality the fact; but on that point, of course, I must now say no more."

"Well, I certainly did imagine that he was anxious for the marriage. However, we will not now dwell upon that. You depute me to obtain her consent?"

"I do; and if you *would* arrange it for us, I should be happy."

"Very good," replied the Doctor. "I'll call, on my way home, and see what can be done."

"Now," thought George, when the Doctor had left, "have I done right or wrong? My impression is certainly that I have done right, seeing that whether she consents or refuses to consent, his interposition can do no harm. She'll not denounce me to him!—of that I feel sure; but he may, and in all probability will, by placing her position in a strong light, induce her to consent, when all danger will be at an end. *She* shall live in affluence! Oh, yes! *She* shall have all that can render life brilliant! It may be brilliant, but it shall be short! She has, however, yet to be secured."

The Doctor, delighted with his mission, on leaving the Hall hastened to Freeman's; and as Jane was still alone, Freeman having gone to one of the neighbouring markets, he sat down beside her with an air of cheerfulness which she, whom Sir John's death had plunged into misery, could not at all understand.

"I have news for you," said he,—"news which I think will delight you, notwithstanding the loss of our mutual friend. I have just left the Hall, where I have had some conversation with George about you. I urged him strongly to perform his promise now: I stated that in doing so he would be acting like a man of honour, and told him plainly that it was, in my judgment, the only honourable course he could pursue. He agreed with me and said that that had always been his impression, but that poor Sir John, although he appeared in my presence and in the presence of others to be favourable to the marriage, was in reality opposed to it—a fact of which I had no previous knowledge. Well, finding that he was earnestly disposed to do that which I conceive to be right, I suggested to him the expediency of a strictly private marriage, and stated that I should feel great pleasure in arranging such

a marriage at once. He then said that he was not quite sure that you would consent to a private marriage, and when I asked him if he would depute me to obtain your consent, he promptly replied, "I will: I will marry her at once, provided all that has occurred be forgiven, if not forgotten."

"Yes," said Jane, who had listened to all with a sardonic smile, "he would marry me now; but I'll not marry him! no such marriage can ever take place."

"Indeed!" cried the Doctor, with a look of intense astonishment. "You amaze me! I know that he has not of late treated you well: I am aware that the notes you have lately received are harsh and unbecoming; but if they were written under the influence of fear—"

"Dr. Farquar, is it at all likely that they were?"

"Why, my dear, it appears that they were; and if Sir John were really opposed to the marriage, it is not at all improbable that they were written by his direction."

"But I feel that Sir John was *not* opposed to the marriage. He told me himself that he had done all in his power to promote it. He even told me that he had given this—what shall I call him?—three days to consider, and that at the expiration of the three days his decision was that he would not be forced."

"Well, my dear girl, assuming that Sir John wished to force him, and that he, resolved on not being forced, wrote those notes voluntarily, would it not be better to forgive him?"

"It is not alone the fact of his having written those notes which prompts me now to repudiate him as he then repudiated me."

"Oh! but you really must forgive."

"Never, sir! Never!"

"You must not be so merciless. You must regard it as a mere lover's quarrel; shake hands, kiss, and be friends."

"No, Dr. Farquar! that can never be!"

"But why not, my dear girl?" cried the doctor, "why not? Now I'll tell you how I meant to arrange it: I intended to take you both to Norwich, to procure a licence there, which can easily be done, have you privately married by a friend of mine, and then bring you back at once, without a single soul here being any the wiser."

"Dr. Farquar, believe me, I feel indeed grateful for the interest you take in my welfare, but I assure you—solemnly assure you—that under the circumstances I *will* not marry that man."

"Well, but it is, my dear girl, at the circumstances I look. Were it not for those circumstances I should not be at all anxious about it."

"I know, of course, what you allude to, and deeply feel my degradation—I hope that I feel my fallen condition as I ought; but I'd rather have my shame proclaimed than be the wife of a man like that."

"Why, my dear girl, to me this really appears to be inexplicable! When I reflect upon your apparently ardent affection for him, and the unbounded confidence you professed to have in him, this sudden change I cannot at all understand. Do you remember the conversation we had on this subject a short time ago?"

"I do," replied Jane. "I remember it well : and in all that I said of my fond affection for him, my confidence in him, and my devotion to him, I was sincere."

"And yet because—no matter under what influence they were written—he sent you those notes, you give all your fond love to the winds ! I really had no conception that love could be so easily shaken off. But it is not so," he added, as Jane sighed deeply : "nor must you suffer pique to blind your judgment. Forgive him : I believe that he is truly sorry for what has occurred. Therefore open your heart and forgive him."

"Impossible," replied Jane ; "impossible !"

"But why, my dear girl—why impossible ? Pardon me for thus strongly urging the expediency of your forgiving him, under the circumstances : believe me, it is for *your* sake, and that of all you hold dear, that I advise you to consent to this marriage."

"I do believe it !—I believe it most sincerely, and feel grateful to you : indeed I feel grateful ; but I must repeat that to such a marriage I never can consent."

"But the form is the same, whether in public or in private—you'll be married at church, though without parade."

"My dear sir, I do not allude to the form. When I say that I never can consent to such a marriage, I mean that I can never consent to marry such a man."

"Well, my dear, well, you perhaps know best. I should have thought that if even you never had that strong affection for him which I was led to believe you had, an offer from such a man would not have been deemed ineligible. Certainly, under existing circumstances, I could not have supposed it *possible* for such an offer to be rejected."

"Such an offer," returned Jane calmly, "might *not* be deemed ineligible : doubtless within a few miles' circle a thousand might be found who would be delighted with such an offer ; but I firmly believe that not one of that thousand, if she knew what *I* know, would hesitate for a moment to reject it with scorn ! My love for him was ardent and pure : my confidence in him was unbounded ; but he who was all the world to me once, I now feel constrained to despise."

"Well," said the Doctor, more puzzled than ever, "I can't understand it. I can't understand it at all."

"*He* understands it, Dr. Farquar," said Jane. "*He* understands it well !—*he* requires no explanation from me."

"Still, my dear girl, notwithstanding this mysterious offence, I must think that if an arrangement *can* be made, it will be better for all concerned. You will, I am sure, pardon me for reminding you once more of the position in which you now stand."

"I am prepared," replied Jane calmly, yet firmly, "to bear whatever humiliation and disgrace may attach to that position, but I am *not* prepared to become the wife of a villain !"

"Then," said the Doctor, "my mission is at an end. I would, however, advise you still to weigh all the circumstances calmly. I would advise you to reflect deeply, in order that your present decision

may be reversed. Let me beg of you to do so, and what has passed between us shall remain unknown, until I have seen you again. You, I know, regard me as a friend—”

“I do—I do, indeed!—and hence the necessity for acting in opposition to your advice is so painful. It may look like ingratitude, but in reality it is not. Believe me, I feel grateful to you for all your kindness; but on this awful subject, my mind is made up.”

“Well, reflect, my dear girl. I will see you to-morrow, when I hope to hear you say, ‘Notwithstanding he has treated me harshly—perhaps cruelly—I feel, under the circumstances, bound to consent.’ There, I’ll not hear another word now,” he added, as he took her hand and pressed it warmly. “In the morning, early in the morning, I’ll be here.”

He then left, and dwelt upon that sudden change which he could not but hold to be marvellous.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JANE’S FIRMNESS DEVELOPED.

GEORGE, notwithstanding the apprehensions which tortured him, went that night to bed. He would not have done so—too glad would he have been to pass the night in the society of some one; but as he feared that the fact of his sitting up again would be deemed at least extraordinary by Charles, and as he hoped, feeling worn out by fear and fatigue, to be able to sleep undisturbed, he placed a bottle of brandy by his side, and at length laid his head upon the pillow.

He was, however, afraid even then to close his eyes; but he had not the power to keep them open: he therefore went almost immediately to sleep; and as his imagination was active, although his body was exhausted, it commenced its career free from the guidance of judgment.

He had a dream. He dreamt that Jane had denounced him, and then the whole process of law passed in review before him. The coroner issued a warrant for his apprehension on the charge of murder. He was captured, and fully committed for trial on that charge; and during the time which elapsed between his committal and his trial, he heard all that was said of him throughout the country, and read the papers, which descanted upon the enormity of his crime. He wrote out his defence voluminously, prepared a new mode of cross-examining the witnesses, and when the day of trial came, there he stood at the bar! Jane appeared, with a brace of pistols still in her bosom; but she fainted, and was carried out of court. Freeman was called, and gave the evidence of Jane. D’Almaine appeared next, but he proved him to be a blackleg; and when Corney stood up, he took him by the throat and strangled him there and then. Judgment of death was accordingly pronounced, when he returned to the prison, and heard the condemned

sermon; and then got the hangman into his cell, where they smoked and drank together until the bell began to toll, when he was pinioned and conducted to the scaffold, and heard the ribald jests and violent execrations of the mob assembled, and shook hands with the hangman in the most friendly spirit, and gave the signal boldly, when the bolt was withdrawn; and with the imaginary fall he awoke, and found himself in a most intense state of perspiration.

He sat up in bed for some time and had some brandy, and then went to sleep again, and dreamt that he and Jane were married; that the child, on being born, denounced him as a murderer; that he strangled the child on the instant, and then gradually poisoned the mother.

Again he awoke and drank more brandy, resolved on going to sleep no more: but he dropped off again, and dreamt that Richard Lejeune had had his reason restored, and that, as an act of retributive justice, *he* had been deprived of reason, and placed with a great variety of maniacs, among whom he found himself pricked and tortured by a multitude of mischievous imps.

From this dream he was drawn into another, in which he stood before the Judgment Seat—with angels in robes of surpassing whiteness on the right, and a host of black-looking demons on the left, demanding his person, with hideous grimaces and most terrific howls, as their lawful prize. The judgment was given, and he was seized; and just as they were throwing him into a furnace, his extraordinary struggles awoke him again.

"I'll have no more of it!" he cried, and rose and washed and dressed himself with feelings of indignation; when, as the day began to dawn, he went to the stable and saddled his horse, and then rode round by Freeman's.

He had, of course, no expectation of seeing Jane at that early hour; but as it had occurred to him that he ought, under the circumstances, to make his peace with her father, he passed the house and lingered near, until Freeman came out with the view of riding round his farm.

"Freeman," said he, as he approached him with a countenance indicative of sorrow, "I know not whether you can forgive me for the attack which I made upon you that night."

"I care nothing about your attack upon me," replied Freeman—"nothing: all I care for is my daughter, whom you heartlessly ruined."

"I am prepared to make every reparation in my power."

"What! have you not abandoned her?"

"No! Nor shall she ever be abandoned by me!"

"What do you mean, sir?—what do you mean? How can you tell me that, after having sent her those brutal notes?"

"Those notes, Freeman, I was compelled to write."

"Compelled to write them?"

"Yes, by my father."

"Alas! poor Sir John cannot contradict you now! How could he

compel you to write those notes, when—as he himself told us—he did all he could to induce you to act like an honourable man?”

“That he told you so, Freeman, I have no doubt; but he was in reality opposed to the marriage.”

“I’ll not believe it!—I will not believe him to have been a hypocrite!”

“The term hypocrite, Freeman, is a very harsh term to apply to a man who is, unhappily, no more!”

“I do not apply that term to him. I do not believe that *he* ever was a hypocrite. I believe that he tried to induce you to do that which was right, and that therefore he never was opposed to the marriage.”

“How is it, then, now that his influence is at an end, that I am anxious to prove my sincerity by performing my promise at once?”

“*Are* you anxious to do so?”

“I am! and Dr. Farquar knows that I am.”

“Dr. Farquar?”

“Yes; I have even deputed him to arrange the marriage, in the event of Jane consenting to forgive all that has passed, and to have the marriage ceremony performed without parade.”

“Dr. Farquar,” said Freeman, “is an honourable man. I would trust him with my life. I must see Dr. Farquar on the subject.”

“Do so,” said George. “He is not up yet; but let us take a turn round the farm, and then call upon him. You will find that he himself suggested the expediency of an immediate arrangement, and I quite agreed with him that the marriage ought now to be as private as possible.”

“Of course,” returned Freeman; “it must be private now. But,” he added impatiently, “the Doctor, I know, is an early riser: let us go to him at once.”

“With all my heart,” said George, who, as he rode by Freeman’s side, endeavoured to inspire him with confidence in the purity of his intentions, and to some extent succeeded in removing that prejudice against him which Freeman had had so much cause to entertain.

On arriving at the Doctor’s residence the found him walking in the garden, when George said, “Now go and consult him alone. I have left the whole matter entirely in his hands, and have therefore no desire to interfere with your conversation.”

Freeman, who highly approved of this course, went at once into the garden, and after the customary greeting, said, “I understand, Dr. Farquar, that Mr. Croly has deputed you to make arrangements for his marriage with my poor girl?”

“He has,” replied the Doctor: “he has done so certainly; but I fear that he has deputed to me a task which I shall find it impossible to perform.”

“How so?” enquired Freeman.

“Why, your daughter declares that she’ll not consent to the marriage.”

“Not consent, Dr. Farquar!” cried Freeman, surprised. “Not consent!”

"No. I saw her yesterday on the subject, and—do not mention this to him until I have seen her again—she told me distinctly, and repeated it with firmness, that she *never* would consent to marry him!"

"You amaze me!" cried Freeman. "Why, I thought that nothing could have delighted her more!"

"And so I thought, Freeman. But she is as much opposed to it now as she was anxious for it before. It's a mystery to me. I cannot understand it at all. You must see what you can do with her, Freeman."

"Oh, I must talk to her seriously about this!"

"Do so : leave him here, and go at once. The folly of withholding her consent, under the circumstances, certainly appears to me to be monstrous. He has treated her harshly, no doubt; but then that must be forgiven. Go, Freeman: go and see what you can do with her. I'll call after breakfast, on my way to the Hall, and by that time I hope you will have obtained her consent."

"I hope so, too," returned Freeman, who immediately remounted his horse, bade George good morning, and left him with the Doctor.

"Well," said he to himself on the road, "this certainly surpasses all! When she was anxious for him to marry her, *he* wouldn't: now he is anxious for her to marry him, *she* won't. Knowing that she is ardently attached to him, this game of fast and loose will, I fear, if pursued, destroy her peace of mind for ever. He has certainly behaved very ill to her,—he certainly has!—he has acted very much unlike a man: there can be no doubt about that. But I must hear what she says: I must hear what she says."

Having reached home he sent up for Jane, who was dressing; and when she came down he said, "Jane, my dear, I have seen Mr. Croly this morning, and have had some conversation with him about you."

"Well, father?" said Jane calmly.

"Well, my dear, he appears to be sorry for all that has passed, and is anxious to marry you privately and at once."

"I am aware of it, father: I am aware of his being anxious to marry me now; but *now* I cannot consent to marry him. I told Dr. Farquar yesterday, when he called with the view of obtaining my consent, that my mind on that subject was firmly made up."

"I have just left the Doctor, who told me that you would not consent."

"And what did you say?"

"Well, my dear, I certainly expressed my amazement."

"Amazement, dear father! Amazement! Why, how could you be amazed?—you who, when he sent his first brutal note, told me that it was written either to drive me mad or to break my heart, he cared not which. Besides, father, did you not congratulate me—I use your own words—did you not congratulate me on having escaped the perpetual tyranny of a villain?"

"True, my dear, true: I certainly did."

"How, then, my dear father, could you be amazed at my refusal to subject myself to that perpetual tyranny?"

"Well, I knew that you loved him : I also knew that when I said he was a villain, you did not believe me. I looked at your position, and then I looked at his, and as he appeared to be anxious to act like a man of honour I forgave him, and nearly forgot what he had done. If, however, you feel that you *cannot* be happy with him, adhere to your resolution still!"

"Bless you!" cried Jane, as she kissed him with fervour. "*I knew* that you would not urge me to sacrifice every hope of happiness!—*I knew* that you would not!"

"No, my girl, I would not for the world! I fancied that, notwithstanding what has occurred, you *believed* you could live happily with him."

"I feel perfectly certain now, dear father, that I should be wretched in the extreme."

"Then remain as you are, my girl, by all means : by *all* means remain as you are. In losing poor Sir John, you have lost one who would have been a friend ; but, as it is, we must do the best we can. I suppose that this—man is his heir."

"Were he heir to all the wealth in the world, his wife—if she knew what I know—would be wretched."

"Then say no more about it. You have made up your mind *not* to have him, and therefore, as far as that is concerned, there's an end of the matter. And now let's have breakfast. The Doctor will be here presently to know your decision. He is an excellent man, and has taken great interest in this affair : indeed, George told me this morning that he not only suggested the expediency of this marriage, but actually undertook to arrange it all himself. We therefore ought to feel obliged to Dr. Farquar, notwithstanding your decision is opposed to his views. Here he is," added Freeman, as the Doctor's carriage stopped at the gate. "Will you see him, my dear, or shall I? Perhaps it would appear disrespectful if you were not to see him yourself."

"*I can* have no objection," said Jane, "to see *him*."

"Then do so," said Freeman, who opened the door for the Doctor, and having politely ushered him into the room, left him with Jane.

"Well," said the Doctor on taking her hand, "I hope that you have reflected on this matter since I left you yesterday?"

"I have sir," replied Jane; "I have reflected, as you wished me to reflect—deeply; but I have found it impossible to alter my decision."

"You have!" cried the Doctor. "Then let me tell *you*, Miss Freeman," he added with a smile, "that you are a very, *very* unforgiving creature!"

"You will consider me a stubborn girl, I fear," replied Jane; "but on this point I must and will be firm!—I never will marry that man!"

"Well, but have you no ambition?"

"I had. I once was ambitious of becoming his wife : it was my *only* ambition. I loved him so devotedly that if an emperor had offered me his hand, I should have rejected it, and taken his with feelings of joy! But that is over. I have no such ambition now."

"Why, there is affluence within your grasp!"

"It may be so, and the bait is tempting; but within that bait there is a hook! Do happiness and affluence necessarily coexist?"

"Certainly not necessarily."

"Would you advise me to sacrifice the former to the latter?"

"No, I would not!—but I do not see that you would have to make that sacrifice."

"I should even have to sacrifice all *hope* of happiness! I know not—indeed God only knows—whether I shall ever be happy again; but as I can, I *will* escape at least the misery which would be the inevitable consequence of my becoming his wife!"

"Well, my dear girl, I can say no more. My object in saying that which I have said, has been solely to promote your interest."

"I believe it, Dr. Farquar: I do most sincerely believe it, and I hope that *you* believe that I feel indeed grateful. It is painful to oppose the views of so sincere, so firm a friend; but in this case I must of necessity oppose them, knowing—as I do know—that misery *must* spring from my acquiescence."

"Well," said the Doctor, "you may, of course, be right! I really thought that such a marriage would be advantageous—certainly I thought so: but as your impression is otherwise, why, there the thing must rest. I must now take my leave. I have to attend the inquest. The coroner has appointed eleven o'clock, and I have another call or two to make. Good morning."

No one likes to be opposed, or to have his views thwarted. *No* one likes to fail in any enterprise. The failure creates a feeling of humiliation, which is at all times painful. If a man undertakes to accomplish a thing and can't, he is hurt: no matter how cunningly he may endeavour to conceal his real feelings, his failure proclaims his inability to succeed, and he doesn't like it. Hence Dr. Farquar, having taken leave of Jane, felt so annoyed at the failure of *his* mission, that, when Freeman went out to see him into his carriage, he scarcely spoke a word.

"I hope, my dear," said Freeman, when the carriage had left, "that you did not offend Dr. Farquar?"

"Oh dear me, no!" replied Jane. "I assured him that I felt extremely grateful to him. Did he, then, appear to be displeased?"

"He certainly appeared to me to be so; he scarcely spoke a word."

"I am sorry for that—very sorry, indeed; still he ought not to feel at all displeased with my decision."

"Certainly not; your decision was right!—I now feel it to be so more than ever; for when he said in that note of his that *you* had led *him* into sin, he proved himself at once to be a cowardly villain! Never mind! We shall be able to manage yet. What do you cry for?" he added, as Jane burst into tears. "I'd rather see you with the spirit of a virago, than see you weep for a man like that. Come, come, my girl!—Come, dry your eyes. What's done can't be undone!—kiss me! There! now let us have no more tears. You have preserved those notes, have you not?"

"I have."

"Then whenever you feel—but I hope you never will feel—regret for the loss of *him*, read them, and your love—your latent love, for I know that you love him still—will at once give way to indignation. Why, there he is!" he added as George approached. "You will not be seen?"

"No," replied Jane, "I will not. Tell him distinctly that my mind is made up, and that therefore all further importunity will be useless."

She then retired, and almost immediately afterwards George was shown into the room.

"Well, Freeman," said he, "have you spoken to Jane on the subject I mentioned this morning?"

"Yes," replied Freeman, "I have; and I find that she is firmly resolved on remaining as she is."

"You have surely sufficient influence over her to induce her to forego that resolution?"

"I have, I believe, all the influence a father should have; but I should never attempt to exercise that influence in the way you mean."

"Look at the great advantages she would enjoy!"

"Were they ten times greater, she would not have you now: in short, she has resolutely made up her mind *never* to consent to the marriage you propose."

"Well, Freeman, well! I am very sorry for it! Perhaps time will alter her views. If not—if she continues to adhere to the resolution she has formed, she must be amply provided for."

"I shall, of course, expect some provision to be made."

"Freeman, it shall be done!—and all that I can do to promote *your* interests I *will* do; for I feel myself bound to make all the reparation in my power. I did hope that Jane, notwithstanding what has occurred, would consent to become the mistress of the Hall: and I hope still that reflection may induce her to change that which appears to be her determination now; but even if it should not, so pure is my affection for her, and so firm is my friendship for you, that her happiness and your advancement shall form my chief care. I suppose that I am to understand by her absence that she refuses to see me? Well, the interview would, under the circumstances, have been painful. She is, perhaps, right; but pray let me beg of you, Freeman, to do all you can to induce her to consent to the marriage proposed. I will make any settlement upon her she may suggest, and will treat her with all possible tenderness. It may appear strange to you, Freeman, that I should, so soon after my poor father's death, have evinced so much anxiety on this subject; but be assured that my only object was to relieve Jane from all apprehension, by proving to her at once that I was no sooner free from the influence under which I have been of late acting, than I was—as I have again and again told her I should be—prepared to perform my solemn promise to her. Unhappily this proof of my sincerity has been rejected; but I still cling to the hope that she will make me happy yet by forgiving all that has passed, and consenting to be mine. And now, my dear friend," he added, taking Freeman's hand,

"I must leave you. I leave you to plead my cause to her, and Heaven grant that your fatherly influence may prevail!"

"Well," said Freeman, when George had left, "he *speaks* fair enough—and so did the serpent that tempted Eve! No: it won't do—I'll not have it! There's something about him I don't at all like—something which fully convinces me that it is not for her sake alone that he is so anxious for this marriage to take place. There is something behind, which I can't yet make out! There is something—but no matter what! He has proved himself to be a heartless villain! and as I feel her decision to be just, I'll not attempt to persuade her to reverse it."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MOURNERS AT THE HALL.

JULIANA that morning received a letter from Charles, stating that, as Dr. Farquar had kindly consented to superintend all the necessary arrangements, he should leave immediately after the inquest had been held, and privately post up to town.

She had, however, scarcely read this letter, when Lejeune sent one of the servants with a message to the effect that he was anxious to see her. She accordingly left the Widow, and went up at once, when Lejeune, who had been cautiously told that Sir John had been "suddenly attacked," said, "My dear, you have, I understand, received a letter this morning?"

"Yes, papa," replied Juliana; "from Charles."

"Well, how is Sir John?"

Juliana burst into tears, and said, "Pray, papa, excuse me. I will send Mrs. Wardle up to answer that question."

Lejeune looked at her with an expression of alarm, and said, "Do, my dear; ask her to come to me immediately."

Juliana left the room; and the Widow, having ascertained why he wished to see her, made up her mind to impart to him at least the fact of Sir John being dead.

"My dear madam," said he, as he rose, although weak, and placed a chair near the table, at which he had been sitting, "I am anxious—most anxious—to allude to a subject which I almost dread to name. You understand me!" he added, with an expression of intensity, "I perceive that you understand me—Sir John is—no more!—is it not so?"

"It is," replied the Widow, as the tears continued to *stream* from her eyes—"it is, alas! It is."

Lejeune sank back in his chair, and wept.

"I expected," said he, after a pause, during which neither he nor the Widow could speak—"I expected to hear of some calamity. When did this occur?"

"I was afraid to tell you before," replied the Widow, "but Dr. Farquar brought the dreadful intelligence of his death."

"I perceive," said Lejeune; "I perceive. But how was he attacked? He always appeared to me to be full of health and spirits. What was the nature of the attack?"

"No disease caused his death," returned the Widow. "He was—killed!"

"Killed!—Did he fall from his horse?"

"No."

"How, then, was he killed?"

The Widow scarcely knew how to reply, but she said at length "Unhappily, he was shot! *Shot*," she added anxiously, "by one who was unconscious of what he did—by one, in fact, who was insane."

"Good God!" cried Lejeune. "This is dreadful indeed! The man, then, is known to be insane?"

"He had just escaped from a lunatic asylum: he escaped with a double-barrelled gun in his possession, and having killed Sir John, he fired at George."

"And is he dead too?"

"No; he is wounded, but not, I believe, dangerously."

"I must," said Lejeune with strong emotion—"I *must* see my friend once more!—I must take a last farewell of him, although he is gone where I may follow soon! He was a man!—he was a man indeed! A purer heart than his never existed—a more generous spirit never breathed. I must go, and see the last of him on earth!—I must go, let the consequence be what it may."

"Charles," said the Widow, as soon as she could speak—"Charles will be here in a very few hours. He has written to say that immediately after the inquest has been held—and eleven o'clock is the time appointed—he will come."

"I am glad of that. I'll return with him. You, too, I know, must see him!"

"I must," replied the Widow, whose grief was most intense. "I must see him on earth once more, and then with calm resignation await the summons to meet him in Heaven. He has been a dear, dear friend to *me*!"

"My dear lady, I know it: I know it well. But we must bear the loss with fortitude. The object of Charles in coming up, we can both of course appreciate. He has the kind and generous heart of his father, and is worthy of being universally beloved. Juliana, of course, knows of this sad affair?"

"She does."

"Well, then, she must go with us; and as Charles will doubtless wish to return as soon as possible, you had better prepare to start to-morrow."

The Widow, with the view of acting upon this suggestion, then returned to Juliana. They had previously countermanded the order for the wedding dresses, and had now to perform the mournful task of

preparing for the funeral—a task which they commenced with heavy hearts, and which occupied their thoughts until the arrival of Charles.

That Juliana was delighted to see him, may be conceived; but the meeting was indeed a tearful one. She flew to him as he entered, and nestled on his bosom, and sobbed convulsively; while he, as he pressed her to his heart, was struggling in vain to subdue his emotion.

For some time neither of them spoke: indeed, before the Widow entered the room not a word was uttered; nor was much said even then until Juliana left with the view of announcing the arrival of Charles to Lejeune, when the Widow expressed some anxiety to hear about the inquest.

"It was very soon over," said Charles. "The evidence was short, but conclusive. Poor George—who is in a dreadful state of dejection—proved, that on hearing the report of a gun, and seeing our dear father fall, he gave the alarm on the instant: the men proved that they saw Richard running from the spot, and that, on being pursued, he turned and fired at George: and Dr. Briggs proved that Richard had escaped from *his* asylum, and was at the time perfectly insane. The verdict, therefore, was to the effect that poor father was killed by Richard Lejeune, who was at the time of unsound mind."

"Did he attend?" enquired the Widow.

"No," replied Charles with a heavy sigh. "The Doctor stated, that in consequence of the wine he had drunk at the Hall, and the excitement induced by the pursuit, a violent fever had seized his brain, and that he did not expect him to survive."

"Heaven have mercy upon us!" cried the Widow. "What a shock this will be to poor Mr. Lejeune!"

"It will be a shock indeed!" returned Charles. "Is he yet aware of any of the circumstances?"

"He knows of poor Sir John's death," replied the Widow. "I told him of that this morning. I also told him how he had fallen, and that the person who fired was insane."

"Ah!" said Charles, "I dread the effect of his being told who that person is. Has he seen the papers this morning?"

"One of them, in which there was no account of the occurrence: the other, which contained a full report, I kept back."

"You acted with your usual discretion. I know not how to break it to him, and yet it is impossible for it to be concealed."

"Perhaps it had better not be named to him until we reach the Hall. I know that his great object is to see poor Sir John once more on earth; and if this intelligence be communicated now, that object may never be attained."

"You are right—quite right. Then he thinks of returning with me?"

"Yes; we have all been preparing to start to-morrow."

"Very good. We'll start early; he can then have a few hours' rest on the road."

Charles then went up to see Lejeune; and when Juliana and the Widow had joined them, he suggested—in order that the name of Richard might not, through any inadvertence, transpire—that the sub-

ject of Sir John's death should not be reverted to that night. This was agreed to at once; but as they were unable to think of anything else, the evening passed drearily indeed.

In the morning they left town early, and having reached the Crown, at Chesterford, stopped a few hours, notwithstanding the air so invigorated Lejeune that he did not feel in the slightest degree fatigued. They then resumed their journey, and on their arrival at the Hall they found George in an attitude of devotion.

As they entered the room, he rose from the chair before which he had been kneeling, and received them with an expression of anguish the most intense.

"It must be borne," said he in a tremulous voice, on taking the Widow by the hand. "It must—it must be borne!"

The Widow, who was too much affected to reply, withdrew alone, and on entering the room in which the body of Sir John was lying, she passionately kissed him, and knelt by his side, and prayed with holy fervour.

"My first object," said Lejeune, addressing George while the Widow was thus devoutly engaged, "is to see the remains of my friend. Will you take me to him?"

"Had you not better defer it," said George, "until you are more composed?"

"I feel," replied Lejeune, "sufficiently composed now; therefore do me the favour to take me to him."

"Charles," said George, who no more dared to behold that sight than he dared to go out after dark alone, "be kind enough to go up with Mr. Lejeune. I feel quite unequal to the task."

Charles at once offered his arm to Lejeune.

"May I go with you, papa?" said Juliana.

"If you wish, my child," replied Lejeune; "yes, come."

Juliana took his arm, and they left the room together.

"Coward!" muttered George between his teeth, on being thus left alone. "I haven't the courage of a rat! I thought myself above all childish fears, but I find that the higher the intellect is, the stronger is the hold which conscience has upon it. What harm can his corpse do me? Can it look at me? point at me? denounce me? No! And yet I fear to see it. Philosophy!—What, in a case of this kind, is the use of philosophy? Philosophy *cannot* be brought to bear upon it! What philosophy can banish this fear? Time *may* wear it away, but philosophy, when it has shadows to deal with, is powerless. I am not a bulldog: I wish that I were."

Having viewed and wept over the body of Sir John, Juliana and the Widow retired; and as Lejeune, who displayed great firmness, expressed a wish to see the spot on which his dear friend fell, Charles descended with him and led him into the glade.

"This is the spot," said Charles, as he approached it; "but where the person who fired stood, we cannot ascertain."

"I should like to see that person," said Lejeune. "Is the asylum from which he escaped near here?"

"Within two miles of this place," replied Charles.

"Oh! within two miles. Is he there still?"

"Yes; he cannot be removed."

"Will you drive me over in the morning? I feel most anxious to see him. No ill feeling, I suppose, had ever existed between him and Sir John?"

"Not the slightest."

"No! Then *will* you drive me over in the morning?"

Charles hesitated, and Lejeune, having on the instant perceived his embarrassment, said, "Charles!—why it is not a great boon I ask?"

"Oh no!" replied Charles; "certainly not. We'll go over in the morning together."

"But," said Lejeune, eyeing him searchingly, "why did you hesitate?"

"Because," replied Charles promptly, "knowing how weak you have been, I did not think that the sight of a poor maniac would tend at all to increase your strength."

"Charles," said Lejeune, "having seen the remains of my dear friend firmly, I think that I can with at least equal firmness see the man who deprived him of life."

"Well," said Charles, "then we'll go over in the morning."

This appeared to satisfy Lejeune for a time, although he felt more than ever anxious to see the "person" by whom the fatal shot was supposed to have been fired; and as Charles found that he was unusually firm, and as he moreover knew that all must of necessity be explained, he resolved on preparing him at once for the announcement that that "person" was his own brother.

He accordingly led Lejeune into the garden; and after having made a variety of observations having reference to flowers and other comparatively unimportant matters, he said cautiously, "I suppose you have not heard from your brother Richard?"

"No, poor fellow, I have not," replied Lejeune. "I can't imagine why he doesn't write to me. It was foolish of him to go away at all. A man should *meet* difficulties, Charles!—he never ought to run away from them. Still I think that he might have written to *me*!"

"Well," said Charles, "I suppose that he doesn't like to write. If I had entered into a speculation of the kind, and had lost so much money, I should have gone completely mad!"

"He has too strong a mind, Charles—too strong a mind to go mad!"

"Have you not found that men of strong minds are sometimes, by the very excess of grief, driven to madness?"

"Yes, an excess of *grief* will upset the strongest minds. But this loss would not induce him to give way to an excess of grief: it would urge him to enter into other speculations with the view of recovering his position."

"And yet," said Charles; "I think that if I had involved a brother, as he has involved you, my grief would be so intense that I should be unable to retain my senses."

"He is not the sort of man, Charles,—depend upon it he is not the sort of man. That he is sorry for this failure—far more on my account than his own—I feel convinced. But his object is to recover himself; he'll not go mad."

"Well, I heard that his losses *had* driven him to madness."

"Who told you so?"

"I certainly heard it."

"Well, but my dear Charles, by whom were you told?"

"By my father."

"Your father! Why, who on earth could have told him?"

"He came down here immediately after the bubble had burst, and announcing himself as the Emperor of China, requested to see his illustrious relative—of course meaning you."

"Well?—well?" said Lejeune with an expression of alarm. "And what did Sir John do?"

"Perceiving that he was insane, he took him at once to an asylum."

"An asylum? And the 'person' of whom you speak escaped from an asylum. From the *same* asylum? Speak, Charles, speak! Is *he* the person?"

Charles was silent.

"Good God!" exclaimed Lejeune as he burst into tears. "It is so—it is so! In mercy speak!"

"It is!" replied Charles, who supported him, and led him into one of the arbours, and added, "Remember! he was unconscious of what he did: he therefore cannot be held to be responsible for the act. I feared to tell you before; but finding you comparatively firm, and knowing that all must of necessity be explained, I embraced this opportunity of naming it, and now I call upon you, as you value your life and the happiness of your child, to be still firm, and meet this great calamity like a man!"

Lejeune buried his face in his hands, and wept bitterly.

"My *dear* friend," said Charles at length, "for your own sake, and for the sake of Juliana, do not suffer yourself to be thus overwhelmed. The blow is heavy, but as poor George said on our arrival, 'it must be borne!' Reflect upon this—I beg of you to do so—that if your brother had been sane at the time, the calamity would have been infinitely greater."

"I am aware," said Lejeune, "that I ought to bear up against it with all the fortitude at my command. The blow is, however, so heavy, that I cannot at once shake off its effect. I will, however, endeavour to be firm, and I fervently hope that He will sustain me. I was not prepared for this. My own brother to kill my dearest friend, and that at such a time! Great God! thy ways are wonderful!"

"I need not remind you," said Charles, "that your health—nay, your life, which is precious to us all—depends upon the strength of your mind: nor need I urge you to keep in remembrance that the fact of your brother having been deprived of reason, releases him from all responsibility. He is to be pitied—not to be condemned. That should of itself be a source of consolation."

Lejeune took his hand and pressed it warmly, and said, "Does Juliana know of this?"

"No," replied Charles. "I will embrace the first favourable opportunity which offers of breaking it to her, seeing that she must eventually know all."

"You say that this asylum is not more than two miles from here?"

"Not more than two," replied Charles.

"I must see him, Charles: I must, of course, see him! Let us go at once."

"Have you sufficient strength to see him?"

"I have—I feel that I have."

One of the servants approached to announce that dinner was ready.

"Well," said Charles, "although I dread the effect of the sight upon you, after dinner we'll go."

Lejeune took Charles's arm again, and returned with him to the house, and when they had gone through the ceremony of dining, Charles ordered the carriage.

"Are you going to leave us?" enquired the Widow.

"We shall not be long gone," replied Charles. "We are merely going to call upon Dr. Briggs."

The Widow—who understood in an instant that all had been explained to Lejeune, looked at him and wept; and shortly afterwards she and Juliana withdrew.

"You have, of course," said George, "explained the lamentable fact to Mr. Lejeune?"

"I have," replied Charles: "and notwithstanding he feels it like a man, you perceive that he bears it like a man."

"I thank God for it!" exclaimed George. "I thank God for it!"

"Will you go with us?" enquired Charles.

"Certainly," replied George, who felt of course anxious to know what Richard Lejeune said on the subject. "Certainly; but before we go, I must beg of Mr. Lejeune to have another glass or two of wine."

"I am firm, my dear friend," returned Lejeune. "As you said this morning, it must be borne, and I feel now quite prepared to bear it."

Accordingly, on the carriage being announced, they proceeded to the house of Dr. Briggs, where they found poor Richard lying on his back, with his legs secured, his hands in what is termed a "muff," and a bladder full of ice upon his head, which had been shaved.

"Richard," said Lejeune, having approached him, "Richard! Do you not know me?—your brother!"

"Ha, ha! old friend!" cried Richard with energy. "What do the enemy think of it now? They have made me a prisoner, you see! Ha, ha! And they call me a murderer! Ha, ha, ha! Why all warriors are murderers—and all their living automata are murderers. They enlist to murder!—they know they must murder, for if they do not they are murdered themselves. Society is based upon murder!—and when the blind man said that *red* was like a trumpet, he meant

that it was sanguinary, fierce, and blasting. Begin with the beginning : it's all murder and humbug. Humbug ! Ha, ha, ha, ha ! What a world this is for humbug. From the highest to the lowest, humbug is the staple commodity in which men deal. Murder is the raw material—humbug weaves and smoothes it down, and gives it a gloss, and there's the fabric. They form together a nation's strength. Mingle them, mingle them, mingle them—and what do they make ? Why glory ! Glorious humbug ! Glorious murder ! Mingle them, I say, and they'll make a land the envy of surrounding nations, and the glory of the world. Even our banners are consecrated—yes, our banners—consecrated to the god of war by the ministers of the God of Peace ; Why they who bless them know that it is impious—they know it ! But bless away—bless away ! If *you* won't, others will, to live in affluence and mock humility. I am a warrior—hence the vulgar call me murderer !—and that's the real name, although it does not sound glorious. But are we not all murderers ? They who have not the courage to murder with their own hands, pay men expressly to murder for them. Your cavalry and infantry, your sappers and miners, your artillerymen and riflemen, compose the very basis of civilization, and within the pale of civilization no really honest man is to be found. Honesty ! Ha, ha ! It exists but in name. An honest man cannot live upon earth—he is too pure for earth ! If one were found, society would war against him, crush or corrupt him—crush or corrupt him ! An honest man, in this world's view, is a man who is rich and escapes the law. Let him have been the greatest villain that ever breathed, if he die *rich*, we complacently write on his tablet 'An honest man is the noblest work of God !' In the world's view, there are no honest men at all poor !—there is no such thing as a poor honest man. There are poor fools, plenty of them—millions of poor fools—who haven't the sense to earn by roguery the reputation of being honest men. Are you honest ?" he continued, addressing George, who had listened to his rhapsody with feelings of pleasure,—“Are you honest, I ask you ? Yes !—in the world's view, you are an honest man, and you call *me* a murderer !—”

“No, no,” said George ; “what you did, you did unconsciously.”

“I say you call me a murderer !”

“My dear Richard,” said Lejeune, with a view of soothing him.

“Why *he* is a murderer,” resumed Richard fiercely. “Do you think that I don't know a murderer when I see him ? He'd murder his own father, that man would.”

“Richard !” cried Lejeune, as George trembled with violence. “Be calm, my dear Richard ; be calm.”

“I know it, and he knows it too !”

“Let us retire,” said Lejeune. “This is too painful, Charles : let us retire.”

“I think we had better,” said Charles ; “our presence appears to excite him.” And while poor Richard was raving, they left the room.

“Heaven pity him !” exclaimed George tremulously. “Poor fellow—poor fellow ! My heart bleeds for him.”

Lejeune was silent and so was Charles. Neither of them attached the slightest importance to Richard's denunciation of George: they regarded it as the raving of a maniac merely; and as Dr. Briggs was absent, they left the house at once.

George, however, felt the sting poignantly. It reached his heart, and there it continued to rankle.

"These gentlemen," said Juliana during their absence, "will, I hope, soon return."

"They will not be gone long, dear," replied the Widow. "They are merely gone to call upon Dr. Briggs."

"But I thought that Dr. Farquar was your family physician?"

"So he is, dear. Dr. Briggs has the asylum in which that poor gentleman who fired at Sir John is confined."

"Indeed! Have you ever seen that unhappy person?"

"No," replied the Widow. "I never have."

"Then you don't know at all what sort of person he is?"

"He has been described to me as a fine tall gentlemanly man, with a commanding voice, and large grey whiskers."

"Dear me!" said Juliana. "Why I should thus describe my dear uncle Richard!"

"He is, I understand, very much like him."

"How very strange! Dear me! if it had so happened that my uncle had been deprived of reason, and had come down here and committed this act, how very dreadful it would have been, would it not?"

"Well, my love, if even it had been so, no blame whatever could attach to him!"

"No, dear; no blame could attach to him, seeing that he would have been unconscious of the act: still it would have been dreadful."

"How much more dreadful, my love, would it have been had he *not* been deprived of reason when he committed the act?"

"That would have been shocking indeed!" said Juliana. "Nothing could have been more horrible than that."

"For my own part," said the Widow, cautiously, "although insanity is, of course, a great affliction, if any relative of mine had committed such an act, it would be a consolation to me to know that he was insane."

"Doubtless," said Juliana, unsuspectingly; "so it would be to me. Had my uncle, for instance, fired at poor Sir John, the knowledge of his being insane would sustain me."

"Of course it would, dear," returned the Widow; "of course. You would then know that he had been guilty of no crime, however deeply you might lament the fact of his having been deprived of his reason. But suppose, my love, that you were the niece of this gentleman—I'll put it so—*suppose* [that you were, how do you imagine that you would feel?"

"Oh, dear! I don't know *how* I should feel in that case."

"But how do you think it would affect you, my love? Such a calamity is just as likely to occur to your uncle, as it is to occur to the uncle of any other lady. Suppose, then, that such were the case;

that your uncle—I will say *your* uncle—was the person who fired at Sir John, you would feel, of course, distressed?”

“I should indeed!”

“But do you not feel as much distressed now as you would then?”

“Well, perhaps not,” replied Juliana. “The fact of my uncle being insane would of itself be distressing: the knowledge of his having raised his hand against the life of our dearest friend, would, of course, increase that distress.”

“Would not the knowledge of the one fact rather tend to diminish the grief induced by the other? Had he, while in a state of consciousness, raised his hand against the life of our dear friend, you would have been comparatively inconsolable; but as it is, you have at least the consolation of knowing that, as it had pleased Heaven to deprive him of reason, he knew not what he did.”

“The consolation of knowing that *he* knew not what he did! Why you do not really mean to say that *he*—my uncle—did it?”

“As I said before, my love, if it *were* so, no blame could attach to him, seeing that he could not be held to be responsible for his acts.”

Juliana looked searchingly at her for a moment, and then said, “Tell me, dear—pray, pray tell me! *Was* this act committed by him?”

“The calamities with which Heaven may afflict us, my love, it is our duty with all possible fortitude to bear.”

“True, true,” said Juliana tremulously. “But did he—did he really do this?”

“My love,” replied the Widow, “if you will promise that you will be calm and firm—and I feel that you have sufficient strength of mind to keep that promise—I’ll tell you all.”

“I will be calm: I will be firm. I will—I will indeed.”

“Well, then, my dear, it did please Heaven to deprive him of reason. Do you not remember Charles suggesting to you the propriety of not mentioning his name in the presence of your papa?”

“I do—I remember it well. Did papa know of this? and was this the cause of his illness?”

“No, he knew nothing of this affliction then. Charles felt of course anxious to conceal it from him—naturally dreading the effect which such a communication might have had upon him then. Well, my love, having been bereft of reason, your uncle came down here. He came one day when you and I were out for a drive; and as poor Sir John at once perceived that he was insane, he placed him under the care of Dr. Briggs, with whom he remained until that unhappy day when he escaped from the asylum with a gun, and fired, and poor dear Sir John ceased to breathe. Remember,” she added on perceiving that Juliana felt faint—“never cease to remember that your uncle had been afflicted by the hand of Heaven, and that he was at the time unconscious of what he did.”

“I must remember that,” returned Juliana faintly; “but it is, notwithstanding, very dreadful indeed!”

“It would have been in any case dreadful, my dear; but how in-

finitely *more* dreadful would it have been had your poor uncle not been unconscious at the time !”

“ He would not have done it then.”

“ Certainly not ! and that is a *great* consolation. Now, my dear,” she continued, with an expression of deep affection, “ I have ventured to communicate this sad intelligence to you this evening, not only because it could not have been much longer concealed from you, but also because I felt convinced that you would bear it with Christian fortitude.”

“ I will endeavour to do so,” said Juliana with strong emotion. “ I will—I will endeavour to do so.”

“ And let me beg of you,” resumed the Widow, “ not to name this sad subject at present to your papa.”

“ Of course he knows of it ?”

“ He does ; but as the knowledge has been imparted to him since our arrival, and more especially as he is now gone to see your poor uncle, any allusion to the subject by you would tend to add to his distress, which I know you would not do willingly.”

“ I would not indeed : no, I would not indeed ! I will act upon your suggestion, and be silent.”

The Widow again embraced her affectionately, and did all in her power to console her ; and when Charles returned with George and Lejeune, she communicated to him the fact of her having explained all, and left her in his hands.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FUNERAL.

THE day appointed for the funeral to take place at length arrived ; and it may indeed be said to have arrived “ at length,” for the few preceding days were passed by the principal mourners in almost silent sorrow. Charles and Juliana were the only two who could be said to have associated,—for George kept himself secluded, drinking and smoking from morning till night ; and while Lejeune scarcely stirred from the apartments appropriated to him, the Widow passed by far the greater part of her time by the side of the body of Sir John.

The day arrived, and early in the morning, hundreds of the poor from the neighbouring parishes flocked into the park, with the view of paying their last tribute of respect to him whose memory they revered, and formed themselves into groups in which they freely descanted on his virtues, and gave expression to their fears that their loss was irreparable indeed. There was no work done on the land that day ; it was for miles round hallowed !

Anon the farmers appeared near the Hall in deep mourning, and then came the neighbouring gentry in their carriages ; and when the hour for the departure of the procession had arrived, the children

belonging to the school which Sir John had founded, sang a hymn with an effect which was perfectly electric! The old men bared their heads, and knelt, and prayed, and sobbed aloud, while the young stood as if struck with paralysis! No dry eye was *there* to be seen!—even the men who officiated wept—and the mournful procession left the Hall amidst tears, and prayers, and lamentations.

On their arrival at the church almost every eye was fixed upon Lejeune, as the brother of the man by whose hand Sir John was supposed by them all to have fallen. This look of curiosity, however, was accompanied by an expression of deep sympathy, and our beautiful burial service proceeded amid silence the most profound.

Sir John's vault was in the church, immediately opposite the pulpit, and when the body had been lowered—while the chief mourners stood on the verge of the vault—the minister proceeded to say, "I heard a voice from Heaven," when on the instant Jane, who was in the gallery with her father, uttered a loud scream, and fainted; and George, whose soul that scream had pierced, fell senseless to the ground.

For a few moments consternation was in the ascendant. Some of the congregation had their eyes fixed upon Jane, who had fallen into her father's arms, while others intently regarded George, who had been instantly raised; and sustained by Charles and Dr. Farquar. Both Jane and George, however, were immediately removed, and the minister concluded the service.

This incident had a powerful effect upon all present. They, of course, knew not what to ascribe it to, and therefore myriads of conjectures were hazarded. Some thought the voice really did proceed from Heaven: others who heard the shriek proceed from Jane, knew better; and while both parties were earnestly engaged in promulgating their views, George was restored to a state of consciousness, and placed in the first coach with Charles, Dr. Farquar, and Lejeune, and the mournful procession returned slowly to the Hall.

George, having alighted with every demonstration of intense sorrow, proceeded immediately to his own room, and drank half-a-pint of brandy. "Fool! fool!" he cried fiercely between his teeth; "and yet that scream pierced my heart! The same shrill tone!—I remembered it well! Was it involuntarily uttered, or not? Would that that scream were her last!—for, while *she* lives, I can never feel secure."

Having inspired sufficient artificial courage to meet the few friends who remained at the Hall, he descended and joined them, and dined with them, and drank an unusually large quantity of wine.

Among them was Mr. Cameron, Sir John's solicitor, who after dinner embraced an opportunity of requesting George and Charles to go into the library, as he had, he said, something to communicate of which he thought they need no longer remain in ignorance. Both George and Charles at once understood that this communication had reference to Sir John's will. They therefore soon afterwards left the room, and were followed by Mr. Cameron.

"Gentlemen," said he, having entered the library, "that which I

have to communicate is the fact of Sir John having left the estate to you, Mr. Charles."

"To me!" exclaimed Charles with an expression of amazement, while George struggled hard to conceal his rage. "You have made a mistake in the name, I presume: you mean my brother George."

"No, sir," replied Mr. Cameron calmly; "the estate has been left to you."

"Well, but my brother?"

"Mr. George *had* secured to him five hundred a year; but one half of that—by a codicil which was signed by Sir John the very day on which he fell—has been left to a Miss Jane Freeman."

"You amaze me!" cried Charles. "Can you account for this, George?"

"Yes, my dear Charles!" said George, forcing a smile, although his brow was studded with cold drops of sweat—"Yes, *I* can account for it. All this was done at *my* suggestion."

"Indeed!"

"In the morning, Charles, I'll explain it all. I need not enter into any explanation now."

"And Mrs. Wardle?" suggested Charles.

"That lady," said Mr. Cameron, "will have during life five hundred a year, which at her death will revert to the estate."

"But dear me!" cried Charles, addressing George, "I can't understand this about you at all."

"Do not feel amazed, my dear Charles," returned George, as he took his hand, and pressed it with great apparent warmth. "I'll explain all to you in the morning."

"I have with me," said Mr. Cameron, "an abstract of the will, which perhaps you would like to see now?"

"Not now," said George. "I quite understand it: you will perhaps do us the favour to come over in the morning?"

"I will, with pleasure. At what time? It will be as well for Mr. Lejeune and Dr. Farquar to be present, for they, with Mr. Charles, have been appointed executors."

"In that case," said Charles, "we must consult the convenience of Dr. Farquar."

"Of course," added George. "But come, let us return to our friends."

Certainly George's cool statement that this will had been made at his suggestion, inspired both Charles and Mr. Cameron with wonder. They, however, said no more on the subject then. They returned to their friends, and shortly afterwards George, with the view of giving vent to his rage, retired.

"*Now*," he muttered fiercely on reaching his room, "I care no more about having shot *him* than I should had he been a mere dog! The hypocrite!—the monstrous hypocrite!—to pretend to have so much affection for me, and then to leave me thus! Why, could he live again, *again* would I murder him! He has *proved* himself to have been my greatest enemy. Away now with every feeling of re-

morse! Perish conscience utterly, and *laugh* at imagination's shadows! Regard that act as one of retributive justice,—for that it *was* so, is manifest now. He couldn't leave the five hundred a year untouched! No! he must rob me of a half even of that! Why, what other feeling than that of hatred can I have for the memory of such a man? What other feeling *ought* I to entertain? *Charles* must be his heir! *he* must be master! Stop!" he added between a whisper and a groan, "I have cards to play which may yet win the game! If I can but work it—and I think that I can—the estate shall yet be mine. I must see—I must see: this requires much thought. For the present I must appear not only to have known all, but to have *suggested* all! That's the first move on the board. I'll return to these *friends*—these worshippers of wealth—and appear unconcerned. They'll not court me much now!—but no matter. Henceforth I'll harbour no feeling but that of revenge!"

He then calmly returned to the dining-room, and soon perceived that all there knew who was master. He, notwithstanding, performed the part he had undertaken well, and sustained throughout his artfully assumed expression of tranquillity.

Lejeune, whom the excitement of the day had fatigued, retired from the table early, and having joined Juliana and the Widow, proceeded to explain to them the nature of the will.

"In the first place," said he, addressing the Widow, "I have the pleasure to inform you, my dear madam, that our deceased friend has left you five hundred a year. This is no more than I anticipated; but that which I am now about to tell you, I can't pretend to understand at all."

"Dear me!" said the Widow anxiously; "why, what is it?"

"It is that he has left Charles his heir instead of George."

"Indeed! Why, what can be the meaning of that?"

"I can't imagine," replied Lejeune. "I thought that perhaps *you* would be able to explain the cause."

"I really have no conception of it," returned the Widow; "I cannot even conjecture!"

"Has George been in the habit of offending his father?"

"Not to my knowledge. They always *appeared* to be on affectionate terms. Certainly George was rather irregular when at Cambridge."

"This will was made since then."

"Then I cannot understand it; for since that time he has been steady in the extreme. His conduct has always appeared to me to be perfectly irreproachable; indeed, he has acquired the reputation of being one of the most pious men in the county."

"Well," said Lejeune, "I don't pretend to understand it."

"Charles was always the favourite son, was he not, dear?" enquired Juliana, who naturally felt that it must have been so.

"Well—I don't know," replied the Widow. "Poor Sir John always appeared to be very fond of them both. But of course," she added, addressing Lejeune, "of course he has left George something?"

"Two hundred and fifty pounds a year," replied Lejeune. "He has also left the same amount to a Miss Jane Freeman."

"Miss Jane Freeman!" echoed the Widow, in a state of astonishment the most intense; "Miss Jane Freeman!"

"Who is she, dear?" artlessly enquired Juliana.

"The daughter of one of our farmers," replied the Widow. "Jane Freeman!" she added; "Jane Freeman!—Two hundred and fifty pounds a year, did you say?"

"Two hundred and fifty pounds a year."

"Why you amaze me!—Jane Freeman! Well, I don't know—of course I cannot pretend to know—but are you sure, Mr. Lejeune—quite sure that that is the name?"

"Oh, I am perfectly certain of it."

"Well, I should have thought of a thousand things before I should have thought of that!"

Lejeune smiled. He saw at a glance what the Widow's conjectures were, and he could have undeceived her, but the presence of Juliana forbade all explanation.

"Is she pretty?" enquired Juliana.

The Widow was indignant certainly; but she managed to conceal her indignation, and replied, "You have seen her, my love: you have seen her at church."

"Where does she sit?"

"In the next pew to ours."

"What that singularly beautiful girl? Oh! she is a lovely creature indeed!"

This was wormwood to the Widow. She knew that Jane was beautiful; but she had always thought that Sir John was immaculate. Two hundred and fifty pounds a year! She could have wept, but would not.

"Did she visit you often?" enquired Juliana, with the most provoking simplicity.

"No, dear; no," replied the Widow somewhat sharply. "Most certainly not: I never saw the girl here in my life."

"I thought that as Sir John had left her this annuity, she might have been a favourite of yours."

"Not at all, my love. Oh dear me no—not at all!"

It was perfectly clear to Lejeune that whatever she might have been formerly, Jane was no special favourite of the Widow then.

"Of course, dear," pursued Juliana, "Sir John must have held her in high esteem!"

"Indeed, my love," replied the Widow, "I know nothing whatever about it."

Whereupon Lejeune took the Widow's hand, and said, "We'll not pursue this subject. In the morning, my dear madam, all will be explained."

But this caused the Widow to feel ten times worse. She felt convinced then that Sir John had been enamoured of Jane, and had *therefore* made this provision for her: and yet she had always

thought that he and Mr. Wardle were the purest men that ever breathed.

She left the room and wept—she could not help weeping—although she felt indignant with Jane. “The *sly* thing!” she exclaimed. “Why I couldn’t have believed it! Two hundred and fifty pounds a year! Well! I hope she’ll be happy: I *hope* she will. No one would ever have thought of *this* who had been in the habit of seeing her at church. She always appeared to be so calm, so gentle, so passionless. *Who* could have supposed it? She is beautiful certainly—it cannot be denied that she is beautiful; but then I had always imagined her to be pure. I’ll see into this: I *will* see into it! I’ll know *why* he left her this annuity! Two hundred and fifty pounds a year! Suppose that we had been married! Why this would have rendered me wretched for life. Two hundred and fifty pounds a year! Man! Man! you are an anomaly indeed!”

On hearing the gentlemen come up to the drawing-room, the Widow descended and ordered coffee, and endeavoured to be as agreeable as possible; but that which occupied her most profound thoughts was the fact of two hundred and fifty pounds a year having been left to Jane Freeman.

The guests, soon after they had had coffee, left, and George almost immediately retired.

“I shall sleep well to-night,” he murmured bitterly—“yes, I shall sleep well to-night. If *not*, I shall have a contempt for myself. I’ll be tortured no *more* by these phantoms!—phantoms of him who has injured me so deeply—blasted my hopes and plunged me into the abyss of degradation! I’ll be tortured no more by them!—if they should come I’ll spit at them, and thus show how utterly I contemn them. But they’ll come no more now: no! they’ll come no more. I began to feel sorry for what I had done; but now I glory in it!—and would do it again—and again! He who robs a man of his birthright is a wretch, and as a wretch I must henceforth regard him. His *affectionate* solicitude! Yes, look at that! No matter. The estate shall yet be mine! By nature I’m entitled to it, and I will have it! This division of the five hundred a year, I suppose, was made to induce me to marry that girl. Well, I’ll marry her—yes, if possible, I’ll marry her!—but if I do, she’ll not have long to live! I’ve set my soul upon this estate, and I’ll have it! What right has he to it?—what natural right? He is master of it now; yes, he is the master! Why, if I cannot work it in any other way, I’ll be his Steward;—yes, I’ll be his STEWARD, and work it then! I must have it, and *will*! I’ll not be thus robbed without having my revenge. Did you see to-night *how* the gold-worshipping wretches fawned upon the master of the Hall? Did you see how earnestly they endeavoured to propitiate him?—how they smiled when he smiled—how attentively they listened to every word that he uttered, and bowed to every opinion he expressed? What was I? An outcast! What was my opinion compared with his? Opinions weigh in proportion to the weight of the purse of those who deliver them!—the wealthy have golden opinions indeed! Here

am I, humiliated, degraded Two hundred and fifty pounds a year! Five pounds a week for the elder brother of a wealthy man! And this must be known to the world! Can I avoid being despised? Why, I shall be marked as the pious five-pounds-a-week man—pointed at as the *ci-devant* heir degraded to five pounds a week! All this will be pleasant, of course,—*very* pleasant; but it must and *shall* be altered! By *some* means I'll have the estate!—nothing but that shall satisfy me now."

Having, with an expression of intense ferocity, dwelt for some time on the means to be employed, he went to bed, and—for the first time since Sir John fell—slept soundly.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WILL.

IN the morning, at the hour appointed by Dr. Farquar, Mr. Cameron went to the Hall with the will, which, when all immediately concerned had assembled in the library, he produced, and emphatically read.

George, during the time which this occupied, was apparently unmoved, and when Mr. Cameron had concluded, said calmly, "Yes, it is precisely as I understood it would be."

"I wish that *I* had understood it," said Charles. "I should at least have endeavoured to prevail upon him to make it a little more *equitable*—if, in a case of this kind, I may use the expression—I mean, of course, a little more impartial!"

"I'll explain all that, my dear Charles, by and by."

"But really it will appear to be so invidious!"

"It will not so appear to you when I have explained. I do not believe that our dear father loved me less than he loved you. You perceive that there is not a single word in the will which can be construed into anything indicative of partiality as far as regards affection. The only thing which can be held to be invidious is the fact of his having left you—the younger son—the bulk of his estate; but, as I said before, when I have explained to you why I desired it to be so, it will appear to be invidious no longer. With regard to the codicil, which relates to Miss Freeman, Dr. Farquar knows all about that; but although it will give me pain to explain it to you, I *will* do so, and you will find that that also was done at my suggestion."

"Well," said Charles, "then nothing more need at present be said on the subject. I must, however, tell you, Master George, that you appear to me to be a very singular fellow! But never mind!—*we* shall manage to make it right in some way."

"I am quite content," said George.

"But I am *not*," returned Charles. "However, we'll talk the matter over by and by."

Having conversed for some time with the Doctor and Lejeune.

Mr. Cameron left the Hall; and shortly afterwards Charles drew George into the garden with the view of having this apparent disinterestedness explained.

"Now, old fellow," said he, "how do you account for the fact of my having been left in this position?"

"I'll tell you," replied George, with an expression of solemnity. "Our father was a just man, Charles—he was indeed a just man; and did I not feel that it behoves me to vindicate his character, I should not be so anxious to explain. He and I have had frequently long conversations on this subject, and I assure you that it required all the eloquence at my command to convince him that he *ought* to do that which he has done. I impressed upon him the fact that my habits were not expensive: I told him that you might marry, and that I never should—and I am sure that at that time I had no idea of entering into the marriage state. I pointed out to him the apparent injustice of his leaving to me, which he did in his former will, nearly the whole of his estate, *because* I happened to be the elder son: I explained to him earnestly again and again that you might want it, and that I never should; and at length I succeeded in prevailing upon him to make the will which we heard read this morning. He did it reluctantly—I admit that it was done with great reluctance—but as it was eventually done, I was content."

"Well," said Charles, "this is a species of disinterestedness which we very seldom hear of!"

"I am aware of it, Charles; but if I have any pride at all, it is that of displaying my contempt for wealth, before which fools bow down and worship."

"I know that your opinions on this subject are of the most ultra character," said Charles. "I remember that when I told you that the insanity of Richard Lejeune had been induced by heavy pecuniary losses, you exclaimed 'Behold the power of Mammon! The lust of wealth corrodes men's hearts: the loss of it drives them mad.' I certainly thought this strange at the time, but I had no conception that your contempt for wealth was in reality so profound."

"Why what is the use of wealth to me? My habits are simple, my wants are but few. I am as it were alone in the world. Why should I wish to be wealthy?"

"Why, were wealth regarded merely as the power of doing *good*, old fellow, I should wish to possess it!"

"I am aware of it, Charles—I am quite aware of that; and as I know that you will do all the good you can, I am glad that that power is now in your possession."

"Well," said Charles, "I certainly never imagined that a man like you would, in reality, be *found* upon earth!—I thought that this romantic contempt for wealth existed in the imagination only!—but I have lived to learn that philosophy is not yet extinct, and that the greatest philosopher to be found in the world is my own peculiar brother! Now look here, old fellow. How are we to manage this? What do you think of doing?"

"I have not yet explained," said George, "why that codicil relating to Miss Freeman—"

"I'll not hear a word on that subject," said Charles. "Farquar told me all about it last night. You have offered to marry her, and thus to make all the reparation in your power, and she refuses to consent. Very well! She is amply provided for, and of course there's an end of the matter. All I want to know is, how you and I are to manage."

"How you and I are to manage?" echoed George.

"Yes; do you think of remaining down here?"

"I do; and all that I wish for, Charles, is the privilege of being still the Steward."

"Well," said Charles, "you puzzle me. I never was so much puzzled in my life. Continue, then, to be the Steward, and I'll make it up a thousand a year."

"I do not wish for that," said George.

"Nonsense, man! Why, that is not one *quarter* of the produce of the estate!"

"I am aware of it, Charles."

"Very well!—then be the Steward still; and your income—I care not what you do with it—give it *all* away to the poor if you like!—shall not be less than a thousand a year."

George took his hand and pressed it warmly, and wept; when Charles, unable to stand this, led him back to the library.

Dr. Farquar, while they were in the garden, took leave of Lejeune, and proceeded to Freeman's, with the view of communicating to Jane the fact of Sir John having left her this annuity. He met Freeman at the gate, and told him at once; and while they were conversing, Jane, who was at the window, naturally imagined that the Doctor had come again for the purpose of inducing her to consent to the marriage proposed. She was, however, soon undeceived; for the Doctor, having entered the room in which she received him, pressed her hand, and said, without the slightest preface, "I have the pleasure to inform you that Sir John, in a codicil to his will—of which I am one of the executors—has left you two hundred and fifty pounds a year."

"Two hundred and fifty pounds a year!" cried Jane with an expression of incredulity, mingled with amazement. "Two hundred and fifty pounds a year!"

"Yes," replied the Doctor; "precisely the same annuity as that which he has left to his son George."

"Pardon me," said Jane, "but let me understand you. You say that he has bequeathed to me two hundred and fifty pounds a year, and then you say that it is precisely the same annuity as that which he has left to his son George! What am I to understand by this? I thought that George was the *heir*!"

"No," said the Doctor. "Charles is the man to whom the estate has been left."

"Why, you amaze me!"

"You cannot be more amazed than I was when I heard of it. Five

hundred a year only was bequeathed to George, and the day on which Sir John fell—on that very day—the half of it was secured to you.”

“Do you mean the half of *George's* five hundred a year?”

“Yes! He has the same income as you have—no more.”

“Dear me!” cried Jane; “how very extraordinary!”

“It is,” replied the Doctor. “It certainly is; but as he suggested that one half of his annuity should be secured to you, I hope to see you reconciled yet.”

“*Did* he suggest this?” enquired Jane earnestly.

“There *can* be no doubt about that,” replied the Doctor. “He knew what the will was before it was read. He knew all about it; and this very codicil, which secures your annuity, was at *his* suggestion signed but a very few hours before Sir John fell.”

Jane felt bewildered; and the Doctor, who saw that she was embarrassed, conceived that she would no longer withhold her consent. But that which induced this embarrassment had no reference whatever to her marriage with George. She was thinking of George's last conversation with her father, and endeavouring to reconcile what he said then with the assumed fact of his having known the contents of the will. She, however, said nothing on that subject to the Doctor, who, after a pause, resumed the conversation by delicately alluding to the effect of the scream which she involuntarily gave in the church.

“I am very, very sorry that it occurred,” said Jane. “I am sorry that the effect which the service had upon me should have caused me to render myself so conspicuous.”

“We all felt, of course,” returned the Doctor, “that you could not avoid it. Still, it startled us all; and as for poor George, he fell, and was for some time insensible.”

“So I understand,” said Jane calmly. “He knew that the scream proceeded from me. I am very sorry for it; but, as you are aware, I have been subject to these hysterical fits from infancy.”

“I am of course, aware of that,” returned the Doctor. “I mention the incident merely because it is manifest that the influence you have acquired over the feelings of George is powerful in the extreme. It gives us pain to see *tears* in the eyes of those whom we love: their violent expressions of agony shock us; for love, as you know, is a species of electricity which communicates from heart to heart.”

Jane was silent—at least, she violated silence only with a sigh.

“Now,” resumed the Doctor, “as it appears to be abundantly clear to me that whether you *consent* to marry him or not, he is determined that you shall at least share his fortunes, I must say that I think it, under the circumstances, lamentable that you cannot be reconciled to him. He appears to have acted—as far as the estate is concerned—in the most disinterested manner, urging Sir John to make Charles his heir, requesting only five hundred a year for himself, and causing even that to be divided with you. Now *my* mission is at an end, of course!—I am not authorised by him to renew the subject; but, as I feel sure that he is still devoted to you, I think that you would do well to reverse your decision.”

"Dr. Farquar," said Jane, "I am aware—well aware—that kindness alone prompts you to renew this subject. I know that you have a kind feeling towards me, and that you urge me thus, solely because you sympathise with me; but, sir, the decision of which you speak can *never* be reversed."

"I have *done* with it!—I have nothing more to say on the subject!"

"Believe me, notwithstanding," added Jane with deep earnestness, "that I feel grateful to you for the interest you have taken, and *thank* you most sincerely."

The Doctor, who still held this decision to be marvellous, pressed her hand, and took his leave; when Freeman entered the room, and, having kissed her, said, "Dr. Farquar has, of course, told you what Sir John has done."

"He has," replied Jane; "but he has also told me that it was done at the suggestion of George."

"And do you believe it?"

"No, father: no, I do not; nor do I believe that he induced Sir John to leave the estate to Mr. Charles."

"And yet, my dear," said Freeman thoughtfully, "I agree with Dr. Farquar that it *looks* something like it!"

"Father," said Jane, "do you remember that when he was here—I mean the last time—he spoke of making me the mistress of the Hall?"

"Yes, my dear, certainly; I well remember that."

"Could he think, then, of making me the mistress of the Hall unless he imagined that he should be the *master* of the Hall?"

"No," replied Freeman thoughtfully—"no: you are quite right."

"This, recollect, father, was since Sir John's—death!"

"Of course it was—of course it was. But," he added, striking his forehead sharply, "he's a *puzzle* to me altogether! Now, my dear, let us look at this calmly. He either *did* know that the estate had been left to Charles, or did not. Very well. If he did *not* know that the estate would be left to Charles, he clearly imagined that *he* should have it, and that therefore he could make you the mistress of the Hall; but if he *did* know that Charles was to have it, he spoke about making you the mistress of the Hall solely in order to deceive you, and wished for this marriage to take place immediately, knowing that you would soon be *undeceived*! Now, my dear, I still think that he *did* know all about it!—although I can't believe—I must say I can't believe—that he urged Sir John to leave the estate to Charles. That appears to me to be entirely out of the question. He is an extraordinary fellow, I know; but an act of that kind would beat nature. With regard to your annuity, I don't know what to think. He might have caused *that* to be done. And yet, what were Sir John's words to me when I told him that, instead of referring the matter to Dr. Farquar, I would leave it entirely to him, in the full conviction that he would, under the circumstances, do that which was just? 'This confidence, Freeman,' said he, 'shall have its effect. It is not misplaced, nor shall it be betrayed. I *will* do that which I conceive to be just, and may do more

than strict justice demands.' Now, my dear, I don't know—I won't pretend to know—the more I think of it, the more I feel puzzled. He may have urged Sir John to do this, or he may not. He appears to be playing the game of see-saw with me: sometimes he's up, and sometimes he's down. I *don't* know what to make of him at all! But that's of no consequence. Whether he induced Sir John to do it or not, the thing has been done, and there's an end of it so far, although I must say that the amount is more—much more than I could have expected. Two hundred and fifty pounds a year, my girl, is a highly respectable income!"

"Yes, dear father," said Jane with strong emotion, "it is a respectable income *when* it has been in a respectable manner acquired; but, father, it can give me no pleasure—no comfort. I shall always regard it—I cannot but regard it—as the wages of my wickedness."

"Nonsense!" cried Freeman. "No, my girl—*no!*—no such thing! I'll not believe now that *he* induced Sir John to leave it! Certainly not! Sir John, doubtless, said to him, 'Now, look you here!—you ought to marry this girl—you certainly ought: but as I find that you will *not*, she shall have a clear *half* of that which I have willed to you. *That's* the way to look at it, my dear! What nonsense to talk about the wages of wickedness! If I thought *that*, you shouldn't have it at all! Sir John, of course, felt that you were entitled to half, because—and *solely* because you had been led to believe that your fortunes, whatever they might be, would be shared, and therefore he left you the half. The wages of wickedness! Let me hear another word about that, and if I can *clutch* this codicil, I'll burn it!"

"My dear father," said Jane, "do not be *angry* with me!"

"Angry! I'm not *angry!*" cried Freeman in a rage. "You *know* that I can't be angry with *you!* but this 'wages of wickedness' makes my blood boil!"

"Then I'll say no more about it," said Jane, "indeed I will not. Come, dear father, come," she added as he paced the room in a state of intense excitement, "come, come, be calm!"

Freeman left the room at once and mounted his horse, and *stuck* his spurs into the animal with vengeance. The horse evidently did not understand this at all—it was not the style of treatment to which he had been accustomed; he therefore snorted, reared, and plunged as if he wished for an explanation; but as the only explanation he got was another *dig*, he wouldn't wait for any more of it; but darting through the gateway, he made up his mind to go *anywhere*.

A moment's reflection, however, was sufficient to induce Freeman to pull him up, and when he had done so he patted him and returned to the house, and kissed Jane affectionately, and said, "God bless you!" and having remounted, he and the horse went off on more amicable terms.

Now as Lejeune had been deputed to communicate to the servants the fact of Sir John having "thought of them" in his will, he, immediately after the Doctor had left the Hall, summoned them into his presence.

"I have," said he when all had assembled, "to inform you that Sir John has bequeathed to each of you—with the exception of Cornelius Craske—the sum of one hundred pounds."

With the exception of Cornelius Craske! Corney almost fainted, while his fellow servants *looked* at him and wondered what on earth he had been up to.

"Cornelius Craske," added Lejeune, "may remain; I have something to say to him in private."

The servants looked at each other and looked again at Corney, and absolutely pitied his case. As Lejeune, however, had intimated to them that they might then retire, they proceeded to do so, delighted of course with their legacies, but vexed that poor Corney had been deemed the black sheep of the flock.

There was, however, one of them who lingered a little behind, and that was Sarah, who with tears in her eyes said to Corney in a whisper, "Never mind, Cornelius, don't fret about it—now pray don't take on: you shall have half mine."

Corney *looked* at her. Well! he never felt so before!—but that's of no consequence now.

"Cornelius," said Lejeune, when all the rest had retired, "I feel a peculiar pleasure in stating that Sir John, whose death we all lament, was very much attached to you indeed."

Corney wept. He didn't care about the money then. He wept; and wept with joy, when he heard that Sir John, for whom he would have laid down his life, didn't die with any ill feeling towards him.

"It appears," resumed Lejeune, "that he had a great respect for your father: it also appears that he sent you to school, and that you have lived with him ever since. He has, therefore, instead of classing you with the other servants, bequeathed to you, Cornelius, the sum of five hundred pounds."

Five hundred pounds! Corney couldn't *speak*. "Five hundred pounds!" thought he. "Why it's the Mint and the Bank of England put together!"

"And now, Cornelius," added Lejeune, "as you have been so faithful a servant to my friend, I hope that you will apply to me should you ever require assistance or advice."

"I return you many thanks, Sir," said Corney. "My heart is too full to say more. I feel obliged to you—indeed, Sir, I feel much obliged."

He then bowed and withdrew, and as Sarah, who had been waiting for him, saw him in tears, she said, "Cornelius, indeed, indeed, I meant what I said: I did—as true as I'm alive I did! Now don't take on so—*pray* don't! You're a good soul, and *shall* have half of mine."

"Sarah," said Corney, as he looked at her with the most intense earnestness, "Sarah!—you're a good sort—what I call a *good* sort!—and I always thought so. But look here, I don't *want* it! and—what's somewhere about five and twenty times better, I never shall! Sir John has left me five hundred pounds."

Sarah relinquished her hold of his hand, and looked at him with an expression of awe.

"Five hundred pounds!" she exclaimed.

"Yes!" replied Corney. "Yes, my girl—I say *my* girl; but I'll only just merely simply kiss you now; another time we'll talk matters over."

And Corney *did* kiss her!—aye, he absolutely kissed her! and she really didn't feel in the slightest degree annoyed

Whether this can be deemed at all extraordinary or not, is a point which for the present may with safety remain. It is of course an open question, but certainly she *didn't* feel annoyed, nor was she ashamed to go into the kitchen with him.

"Now, come here, old fellow: now just you come here," said Peter Borley, as Corney entered with Sarah. "We've just a been a taking your case into warm consideration. It's clear to us all that Sir John didn't think of you. His memory altogether forgot to remember to bear you in mind. Very well. Now as you've been what I call a trump of a fellow servant, and as we all like you and don't see why you should be forgot any more than any of us, I'll tell you what we've been a doing. There's twenty on us—twenty altogether—and we've made up our minds unanimous and universal to do what's nothing but real correctly right, and the name of that is, that we'll *make* it up to you. Now look here. You're a capital sort—if you wasn't we shouldn't care nothing about you; but you *are*, and as such five pounds a-piece we consider won't hurt us. Now that'll cook the lot: and so as you've been allus universally respected, and as it's as clear to us all as the sun at twelve o'clock that Sir John—bless his memory!—forgot to think of you in his will, and as we all feel that we never shall miss such a thing as a five pound note out of a hundred, we have come to the just and universal conclusion to stand a five pound note a-piece, which'll make up your share and five pound more, which five pound more you can spend, if you like, in a jovial manner among us."

"Now look here," said Corney, who highly appreciated this. "Now look here: my feelings have, within the last five minutes, been universally harassed—"

"Never mind!" cried Peter Borley; "this'll make it all right! Don't you see how you're respected by the whole biling of us?"

"I say," resumed Corney, "and I hope you'll hear me speak—that within the last five minutes my feelings have been universally harassed, and if anything in this world could harass them more, it's the kind and true-hearted and stunning good will of my respected fellow servants, which has altogether expostriulated *me*. Why I feel like a king!—like an out-and-out king!—for send I may live if I don't like you all. And why?—why do I like you?—Why, because you like me—because I know that you like me, and this out-and-out offer proves it."

"If we didn't," said Borley, "it's peculiar clear we shouldn't have done what we have."

"That's it!" cried Corney—"that's the very thing! Now just

you look here. There's nothing gets over a man more than kindness. Kindness blunts the stings of life. It's nature, kindness is!—what *I* call universal nature! and if a man's ever so angry, or so hurt in his private individual feelings, kindness soothes him quietly down to the happy level of an innocent child. It's Mother Nature's milk, is kindness! It gets completely over a man, and makes him feel he's flesh and blood, and not a mere machine. I can stand unkindness; I think, as well as a man here and there; I can stand being looked black at—stand being robbed—stand being sent through a window clean,—which *you* know, Borley,—that *you* know; but I can't stand kindness; if I can, then send I may live to stand it! Now just look here: you propose to be kind to me, and if I don't love you—the whole lot of you—all I can say is, I ought. You propose to make up to me this hundred pound, which you say you feel sure Sir John wholly forgot to remember to leave me. Now this, you know, is what I call stunning—stunning *I* call it!—and so it is: it's worth about five-and-twenty times more than a hundred pound to my feelings, seeing that those feelings are so exopstriculatedly touched that I really hardly know what to do with myself. But look here! I don't *want* the money! Now mind! I don't say this in any spirit of pride, or exopstriculation, or anything of that. I don't say it because I don't think it worth having, or because I have that which they call a contempt for it, or because I won't have it because it's proposed to be given by you. Not a bit of it! I love you all for it, and allus shall; but I don't *want* the money!”

“Have it, and say no more about it!” cried Borley. “*We* shall never miss it!”

“Peter,” resumed Corney, “you're a good friend to me. You are all good friends, and I know it, and I now know how to respect you all; but allow me to speak, and then you'll see that I really don't want this hundred pound. Now look here: you know my old father? Very well. He's a droll un, but a good un; there ain't two opinions about that. He's allus had the name of being a good un; and he deserves it! He's got a heart, he has—a universal heart! But that's neither here nor there, you'll say; but what's both here and there is the fact of Sir John having liked my old father. He respected him, as Mr. Lejeune said just now—he respected him highly. Very good. Now you know that when I was a mite of a kid—scarcely more than sixpenn'orth o' ha'pence high, and my father didn't know where to go for a pound—as he had all his money locked up in his land, Sir John took a sort of a fancy to me and sent me to school, and had me educated regular. Very well. When I'd been completed at school, I came here—which you know, and more especially my friend Peter Borley—I came here, and here I have been ever since.”

“We know it—we all know it,” interrupted Peter Borley; “we know it's a had case; we know that, and therefore you *shall* have what we have subscribed.”

“Well, you won't hear me out,” continued Corney; “but no matter.”

"Yes, we will!—yes, we will hear you out!" cried Borley. "We only think it hurts your feelings to say so much about it! Say you'll take it at once. It's freely offered, and ought to be as freely received."

"I'll tell you what I'll do with you," said Corney—"I'll *tell* you what I'll do with you. I'll take it, if you like, and I'll put five-and-twenty pounds to it, and place it in the hands of Mr. Lejeune for the purpose of erecting a monument to Sir John; and thus to show our respect for him, and our gratitude to him. I'll do *that*, if you like."

"*You* put five and twenty pounds to it!" cried Borley.

"Yes! and that with an enormous amount of pleasure. I'll not have the money myself, I don't want it, and if you'll just listen to me, I'll tell you why."

"Well, but this you know gets over me altogether!—give away five and twenty pound rather than have a hundred!"

"Now look here," said Corney; "now just you look here. I told you that Sir John respected my father, and that when I was a boy he took a fancy to me. Very well. Now in consequence of these two things put together—what with the respect he had for him, and what with the fancy he had for me—Sir John has left me five hundred pounds!"

"*Five* hundred!—*five! five* hundred pound!" cried his friend, Peter Borley, with an expression which denoted the existence of a feeling of the most intense amazement. "*Five* hundred pound!"

"Five hundred pounds," replied Corney, with peculiar calmness; "I say five hundred pounds. Now look here," he added, as he perceived that almost all his friends received the announcement with strong expressions of dissatisfaction. "Look here! You mustn't be jealous because you've only one while I've five hundred left me! You must look at the natural exprostratedness of my peculiarity as far as regards my father and myself. You must remember that he's the oldest tenant on the estate, and that I am the oldest servant in the house, although not the oldest man. Now just look at that! These are two facts, you know, which can't be denied; and if you reckon these facts at two hundred and fifty pound a-piece, there you have at once the five hundred pounds!"

"Well, I know!" returned Borley. "But five hundred pounds! why that's an enormity of money!"

"It is: it is! It is an enormity. It certainly is, as you say, an enormity! But I think that at least I have proved to you all, not only that I don't want this hundred pounds from you, but also that, feeling sincerely and universally proud of the good will displayed by you, who shall always be regarded, in consequence, by me, with the most tender feelings of stunning admiration, I feel the kindness you intended towards me so deep that I can't exprostricate myself as I ought; but believe me, I have got an out-and-out recollection, and also a heart which feels as it ought."

"Well," said Borley, "if you've been left this, why of course you don't want our assistance."

"I don't," replied Corney; "but *if* you should ever want mine, old boy—or any one of you—you shall have it. There's no mistake at all about me, and I hope there never will be. Whether I'm here or anywhere else, you'll allus know where to find me, and you'll allus find me ready to do a good turn. And now what do you say to this monument? You know it'll be such a mark of respect!"

"Oh! *I'm* ready to subscribe," returned Borley. "*I'm* quite ready to subscribe; but what 'll be about the expense?"

"Well, that I don't know. But I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll speak to Mr. Lejeune about it; and as I've been left five times as much as you, I'll stand five times as much towards it."

"Well," said Borley, "that's fair—very fair. Then do you get a notion of what it 'll cost, and I'll warrant the sum 'll be made up amongst us."

"Very good," returned Corney; "then it shall be done. I'm going to ask leave to go home for half an hour, and when I come back, I'll exprostricate all. Sarah," he added, in a whisper, "I want to speak to you." And Sarah followed him into the hall, and felt delighted and happy; but her complexion, notwithstanding, was particularly red.

"Sarah," said he when no one else was near; and as he said "Sarah" he patted her cheeks, and actually kissed her again!—"will you go along with me and see my old father?"

"Lor', Cornelius!" replied Sarah; "what'll the world say?"

"Let the world say what it likes: what's the world got to do along of us? We don't want to care much about the world now. Let it say just what it thinks proper to say: what need we care about the world? The world's nobody—not a ha'p'orth of it! We're independent of the world! Will you go?"

"I'll go anywhere with you!" replied Sarah.

"That's good! Then we've got about half way already. I thought I wasn't *very* far out!—I thought not! and this makes me feel that it's proved. Then run away and put on your things. I'll go and ask leave to go; and we'll go, and let the world say what it likes!"

Certainly Sarah didn't care much about what the world might say then: she therefore *did* run away, and *did* put on her things, and when Corney had obtained leave of absence, she took his arm with feelings of pride, and they left the Hall together.

"Sarah," said he when they had passed the plantation, "were you ever in love?"

"In love!" exclaimed Sarah. "Dear me, what a singular question! In love?" she added, feeling, as she subsequently explained, "fit to drop." "In love, Cornelius? Well, as true as I'm alive I don't know, and that's the fact; but I think—I don't know—but I think that I have been."

"What!" cried Corney. "Why you don't mean that?"

"I do," replied Sarah. "I do mean to say that I think so, and moreover than that, I mean to say that if I know what love is, I *know*

Part 5.]

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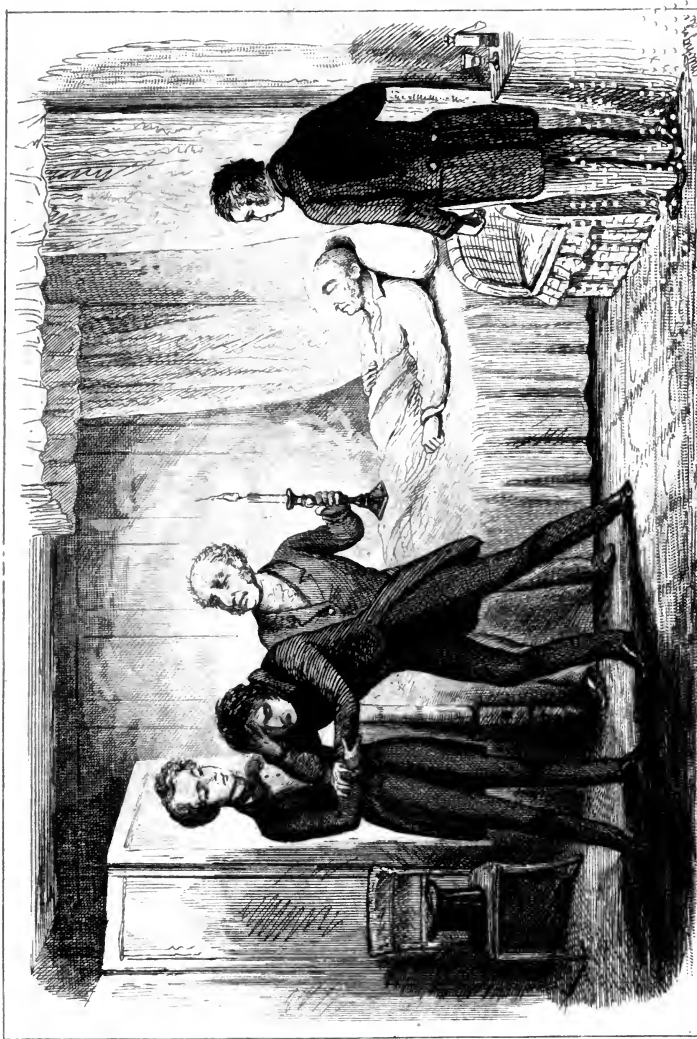
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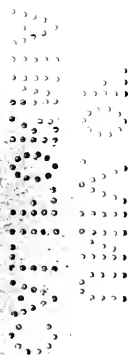


Corney confesses he's 'a courtin'.



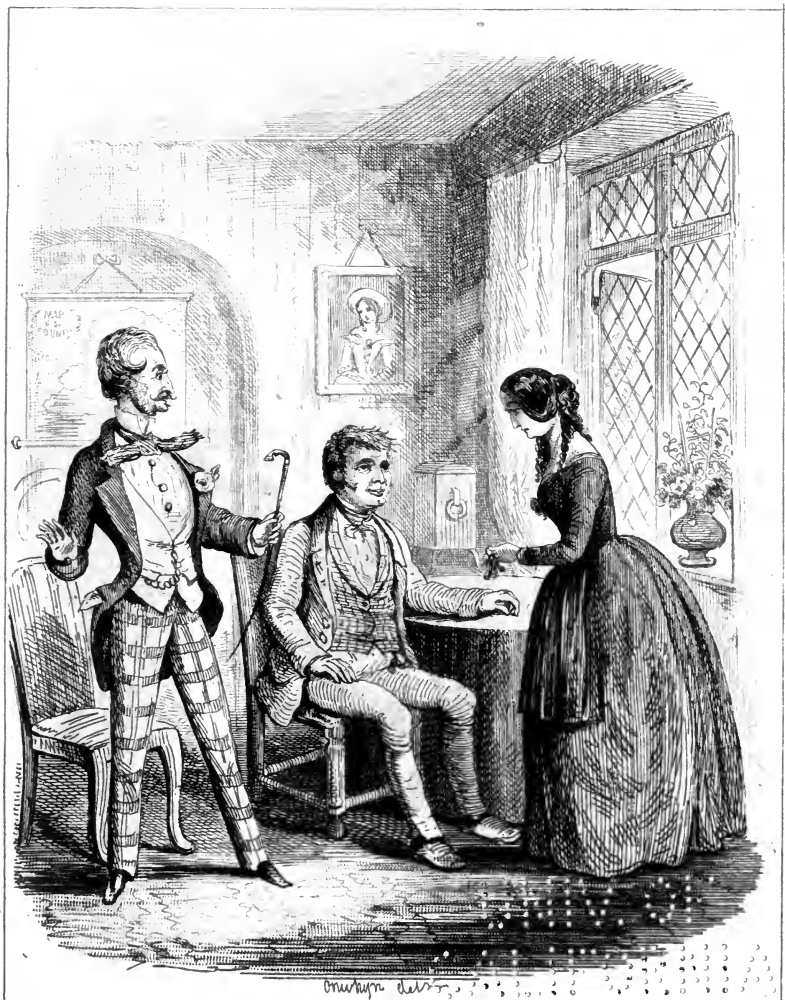
George's emotion at witnessing the death of Lejeune.







Aunt Anne objects to Corney's going to Foreign Parts



D'Almaine struck with admiration

TO THE

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so ! In fact," she added archly, "I feel quite convinced that if I don't love, there is no such thing as love at all."

"Oh, that alters the case!" said Corney. "The thing's at an end ! It's of no use saying another word about it !"

"Why, Cornelius?—why?" enquired Sarah.

"Why, if you're in love already, that's enough. You can't love two at a time, can you?"

"No, Cornelius, certainly not!"

"So I should say. But who is this animal?"

"Animal, Cornelius!"

"Aye; I mean the one you love."

"Dear me, Cornelius, he's no animal!"

"Well, then, he's a vegetable, perhaps. But do I know him?"

"Well, you have known him from a child. You've known him as long as you've known yourself."

"What! do you mean Peter Borley?"

"Peter Borley, Cornelius! Dear me, you *can't* think that I could ever love such a man as Peter Borley?"

"Well, I don't know—he's not half a bad sort."

"No, but look at his age!"

"Well, that's sufficient, certainly. But if it's not him, who is it? What's he like? You say that I know him. Tell me what sort of a man he is, and then you know I may perhaps probably guess."

"Well," returned Sarah with glowing cheeks, which the necessity for answering this question in some way had raised to a burning heat, "in the first place, in my eye, he's very good looking: in the next place he's wonderful clever: in the next after that he's got a good heart; and in the next he has allus been so kind to me that if I didn't like him I *should* be ungrateful."

"That's quite right," said Corney. "I like you for that; whatever you do, never be ungrateful. A man once behaved ungrateful to me in London, and I shall never forget it, if I ever forgive him. I treated him to all he liked to take, and paid freely for all he had; and what did he do? Why he robbed me!—he robbed me of my watch and a capital silk handkerchief, and seven-and-sixpence in silver, besides a mob of coppers!"

"I wish I'd been there!" cried Sarah indignantly: "I only just wish I'd been there: that's all!"

"Now that's what I call ingratitude," continued Corney; "therefore *never* be ungrateful. But who is this that's allus been so kind to you? I never saw anything of the sort in any of 'em. I've known 'em to behave unkindly to you often, and to say things I didn't like to hear, because I knew it wasn't right,—and I've told 'em so. But perhaps it isn't any one connected with the Hall."

"Yes, it is!—oh, yes!"

"Then you puzzle *me*; because I never did see any of 'em behave what I call kindly to you, and I've allus seemed to like you all the better because they didn't. But who is it? Come, now, let's know who he is? You don't mind telling me—at least, you don't ought to

mind—because you know, or at least you ought to know, that whatever you say to me goes no further.”

“I do, Cornelius—I do know it well.”

“Well, then let’s have his name: come, tell me at once.”

“I dussent,” said Sarah; “indeed—indeed I dussent.”

“You dussent? Why—why not?”

“*Because* I dussent.”

“Well, that’s a good reason as far as it goes.”

“I shouldn’t mind,” added Sarah timidly—“I shouldn’t mind much telling anybody else; but I dussent tell you.”

“Well, all I can say is it shouldn’t go any further. I should like to know which it is, I must *say*, because I never saw any particular attention paid to you.”

“And yet,” returned Sarah with feelings of gratitude, “I *have* had particular attention paid to me!”

“Well, all I know is I never saw it. Is it one of the grooms?”

“No.”

“Is it one of the keepers?”

“No,” replied Sarah with a smile, “nor one of the keepers. But why are you so anxious to know?”

“Oh,” said Corney, “I’m not particular *anxious*. You’ve only raised my curiosity up, that’s all.”

“Will you tell me, Cornelius, why you mentioned the subject?”

“Well, I mentioned it because I didn’t think you were engaged.”

“Nor am I, Cornelius—not to say engaged. My affections are engaged, it is true; but that’s not what I call an engagement.”

“Well, it ‘mounts pretty well to the same thing: but whoever he is, my girl, I hope that he’ll make a good husband.”

“I’m sure that he will!—oh, I’m quite sure of that—that is to say, if he ever *should* marry.”

“What! hasn’t he made you an offer then?”

“No.”

“Well, but he knows that you are fond of him, of course?”

“Why,” replied Sarah with a sigh, “it appears not.”

“Is he fond of *you*?” enquired Corney.

“I have thought so,” replied Sarah tremulously, “and I think so still. He has frequently caused me to believe that he is.”

“Then don’t you think it strange he doesn’t make you an offer?”

“I *now* begin to think it rather strange.”

“Why, of course! If I were fond of a girl and she was fond of me—and if she was fond of me I know she’d make me fond of her—I’d not go on dilly-dallying so: what’s the good of it? I’d say to her regular, ‘Now just you look here: we are fond of each other. Very well. Now it ain’t perhaps convenient for us to marry just yet, but will you consider yourself booked?’ That’s what I should do: I should come to the point at once.”

“Then why *don’t* you do so?” said Sarah almost unconsciously, and trembled for the consequence of what she had said.

"I do so! I was merely saying that if I liked a girl and she liked me, I'd do it."

"And is it not so?" enquired Sarah earnestly.

"How can it be when all your affections are engaged?"

"Why what a bad opinion you must have of me, Cornelius!"

"I? a bad opinion of *you*?"

"You *must* have!"

"Not a bit of it!" cried Corney. "No such thing. I allus thought you an out-and-out sort!"

"And yet you must suppose me to be a very wicked girl."

"*There's* a job! Now only look at that! I suppose you to be a very wicked girl? Why, what in the name of *all* that's afloat could have knocked such a thing as *that* into your head?"

"I'll tell you, Cornelius," replied Sarah timidly—"I'll tell you. When you asked me, Cornelius, if I was in love, I said that I thought so—I *thought* so—and that if I knew what love really was, I was sure of it. I also said that the person I meant had allus been so kind to me, that if I didn't like him I should be ungrateful."

"You did: yes, that's right: well, go on."

"Well, such being the case, don't you think me wicked for offering *you* half Sir John had left me, when I thought that he had left you nothing? Don't you think me wicked for allowing *you* to kiss me as you did when you left the room?—and don't you think me wicked for walking with you now, and talking as we have been talking about love. If you think that I would do these things for any one but him I mean, you must think me wicked indeed!"

Corney stopped, and looked at her earnestly, and laughed, and threw his arm round her neck passionately, and kissed her; and then laughed again, and patted her cheeks, and chucked her under the chin, and absolutely took all sorts of liberties with her face, until it became as red as fire, when he exclaimed, "*There's* a job! Now look at that! You said he was clever—wonderful clever!—Wonderful clever indeed to be walking and talking here all this time without finding out who you meant! I shall think *myself* clever after this—*very* clever. But send I may live!" he added passionately as he embraced her, and kissed her again and again; "*I love* you stunning! I *know* you're a good un! I *allus* thought so; and whenever you've been sort o' slighted I've allus stuck up for you, Sally, like a man; for I allus felt suffen inside me that told me I oughtn't to hear you run down. Now look here,—we're booked: that's of course understood: we're booked to travel together through life. And now give us a stunning kiss to bind the bargain. Why," he continued with an expression of fervour when they had embraced each other ardently, "*I could eat you!*—only I want you to kiss me another time. *Sha'n't* we be happy?"

"I hope so," replied Sarah, panting for breath; for his kisses—although pleasing to her—were really of so violent a character that they caused her heart to beat at the rate of a hundred and sixty. "I hope so, Cornelius."

"Safe, Sally!—*safe*, my girl! There can't be anything *like* two

opinions about it. You'll make me a good wife—I know you will! and I'll make you a good husband. What can we want more? We've got plenty of money—loads of money. We can roll in it, and *will* roll in it, if it's only for the sake of saying that we have done so. Who's to prevent us from being happy? We will be happy!—eh? we *will* be happy! Nobody's got anything to do with us now. We're independent people—regular independent! We can either live right up, or go into business: which we like."

"I think," observed Sarah,—"you know best—but I think we'd better go into some way of business."

"Oh, you're thinking about the children!"

"Cornelius, dear, I didn't say anything of that!"

"No, I know; but you meant it, and very proper too! We shall have, however, loads of time to think about these things, and heaps of opportunities of talking them over. All we have to do at present is to keep close. Never mind what the world thinks, or what it says. Independent people don't care about the world. Don't let anybody know what we know. Keep the thing a secret, and some fine morning we'll go to church, like two of the nobility, and have a regular marriage in high life stunning. I shall tell my father, and you can tell your mother; but besides them, at least for the present, let all flesh be kept in the dark. And now look here," he added as they approached his father's house, "we shall have to stop and take a bit of dinner, of course; and as I want, in a universal manner, to astonish the intellects of my old dad, do you go and potter about with aunt Ann, and leave me with him till dinner's ready: you understand?"

"I do, Cornelius—yes, dear, I do," replied Sarah with a countenance glowing with delight. "I feel *so* happy—so very happy, dear; nothing can be like it."

"Happy, my girl! You're not half happy. You're nothing to what you shall be! This is nothing more than a *smell* of happiness!"

"It's very nice, dear!"

"I believe you, my beauty!—it just *is* nice! But look here: I like you to call me *dear*: it sort of 'chants my feelings; but recollect, if you come it in company, they'll smell a rat at once. When we're together alone it's luscious—it's one of the universal luxuries of life; but if you want it kept secret—and if it be known, we shall only be bothered—drop dear in company; cause if you don't you'll let the cat out of the bag. Wait till we're married, my beautiful rogue—for you do look stunning beautiful now; you allus was pretty—particular pretty—but now you look prettier than ever to me. Wait till we're married, I say, and *then* you'll see what we'll call each other, my girl! We shall have no fear then of coming it too strong: we can then let loose dears, ducks, and darlings, like life; *that'll* be the time to tell each other what's o'clock!—But here's father," he added as Craske came from the stack-yard. "Just ask him how he is, and then go in."

Sarah did so: she felt unusually pleased to see him, and enquired particularly after his health, and expressed her delight on being told

that he was as well as could be expected; but Craske looked at her with an eye of suspicion: her anxiety inspired him with an idea; and when she had left to go into the house, he turned to Corney, and leaning upon his stick, looked up at him searchingly, and said, "I say, together—are yow a courtin' o' that murther?"

"Yes," replied Corney; "I've been courting her for the last three quarters of an hour."

"But I mean are yow right on a *courtin'* on her?"

"Of course!"

"But not serious?"

"Yes, and universal; and what's more, we're going to be married."

"There, bor, hold your rubbidge, do!"

"It's a fact!"

"What, yow marry!—yow?"

"Of course! Why shouldn't I as well as the nobbiest nobility in the land?"

"Why shouldn't *yow* marry! Go along wi' yar nonsense, bor—don't talk such muck. *Yow* marry!"

"Why should I not?"

"*Are* yow in airnest?"

"I am," replied Corney. "The job's jobbed! all's settled! I've booked her universal!"

"Then yow've booked yarself, bor, to go into the workus with her."

"Not a bit of it!"

"What are yow to do? What are yow fit for? What ha' yow bin brought up to? What do yow know? Yow can wait at table, and clane the plate, and ate and drink, and ride behind a carriage; but yow won't be no good in sarvice then: married men's no good in sarvice; they won't ha' none o' yar 'cumbrances there: and then what are yow to do? It ain't in yow to work like a labourin' man; yow wouldn't be wuth yar salt on the land! Yow might kape birds, and yar wife might go stonin' and get about sixpence a day atwixt yow; but as for anything else yow could do, it's all a parcel o' rubbidge!"

"I might take a farm," said Corney; "*mightn't* I?"

"*Yow* take a farm! There, don't run on such a pack o' muck, pray dont."

"But why should I not take a farm?—a farm of a hundred acres or so?"

"Are yow out o' yar *mind*?" cried Craske.

"Not a bit of it!"

"Yow *must* be to run on so! Come along in, bor, and have a mug of ale: wives and farms, bor, ain't for such as yow."

"Well," said Corney, "I'll have a drop of ale, and then we can talk the matter over again calm."

"Corney, bor, talk about anything sensible: don't talk to me about morthers and farms."

"Well," returned Corney, who enjoyed all this, "if even we don't know much about farming, we can take a public-house, *can't* we?"

"Yow're out o' yar senses—I *know* yow are! Yow *must* have a strait jacket on to talk thusn!"

Whereupon Corney laughed heartily, and followed him into the house, and sat down with him, and had a mug of ale; and when the coast was clear again, the subject was resumed.

"That Sarah of mine," said he with a smile, "is a tidyish piece of goods, ain't she?"

"That Sarah of yowrn, indeed!" returned Craske. "The morthor is tidy enow, and allus was; but if yow was to marry her, nayther on yow would be tidy long."

"But don't you think she'd look stunning now serving at the bar o' a regular inn?"

"Now look you here. Do yow want to drive me out o' the house?" cried Craske, who really began to feel angry. "Whenever yow come, I'm allus glad to see yow, and allus shall, so long as yow talk a leetle matters sensible; but if yow're a goin' to run on such rubbidge as that, I won't stop to hear it, nor any sich muck. Yow *know* I've got no money to give yow to go into business, nor more ain't her mother got none—"

"No, but *she* has," said Corney. "She's got a hundred pounds! Sir John left her a hundred pounds, and left them all a hundred a-piece but me!"

"Left em all a hundred pound but *yow*!" cried Craske, with an expression of mystery mingled with alarm; "every one on 'em but *yow*?"

"He left every one of them a hundred pounds but me."

"I doubt, Corney, bor, yow've been up to suffen—I doubt yow have! He's cotched yow at suffen—I'm sartin he has. I never did like that listenin' consarn—I never approved o' yowre key-hole work. I allus said it 'ud come to no good. And here yow are. He's cotched you at it, and punished yow thusn! I'm sartin of it—I know I'm right!—I'll bet my life upon it!"

"Yes, I know: you'll bet your life, or you'll bet a farden cake: its allus a farden cake or your life: you never bet anything between. Yow dussent bet me twenty pound of it!"

"Twenty pound! Where are yow to get twenty pound to pay, if yow lose?"

"Oh, I'd find the money!"

"But where? Yow wouldn't have the heart to borry it o' that poor morthor?"

"I shouldn't want. I'm not without twenty pounds, nor twenty at the end of that!"

"Yow're not?"

"No!"

"Why," said Craske, with a look of apprehension, "how come yow by it? I hope," he added,—"I *hope* that yow've allus been honest!"

"I have," replied Corney. "Yes, yes, I allus have."

"I *hope* so," pursued the old man, with strong emotion. "Anything but that, my boy—anything but that. That blow would strike me down into the grave!"

"There, now, don't fret yourself about that," said Corney. "It's nothing of the sort, and never was, and never will be; but if you'll just keep quiet for about half a second, I'll tell you all about it: I'll tell you why Sir John made a difference between me and the others. But first I'll tell you how I'm respected. Now look here. Mr. Lejeune, who is one of Sir John's executors, has us all up this morning, and says, says he, 'I've the pleasure to inform you that Sir John has left you all a hundred a-piece, with the exception of Cornelius Craske.' Well, I looked at the rest, and the rest looked at me, and I dare say I looked as if I didn't half like it—no more I didn't!"

"No, I should say not," said Craske. "I should say not."

"Well, 'Cornelius may remain,' says Mr. Lejeune. 'I've got suffen to say to him in private;' when up comes Sarah to me and whispers, 'Never mind, Cornelius, don't take on: you shall have half of mine.'"

"She did?" cried Craske.

"She did. Well: down they go; and while Mr. Lejeune was telling me why Sir John had made a distinction between them and me, what did they do but entered into a subscription of five pound a-piece in order to make up that sum, which they all felt Sir John had forgotten to leave me."

"Well, that was very handsome," said Craske; "very handsome indeed."

"It *was* very handsome. And when they told me of it, I was almost fit to cry; but I wouldn't have the money, I told them I wouldn't have it."

"Not have it! Not have a hundred pound! Why yow want a strait jacket after all. Not have it! Five pound out of a hundred wouldn't ha' been much to them, but it would ha' been all to yow."

"Still I wouldn't have it! and now I'll tell you why."

"Stop a bit! let's go on regular. You say that they was a doin' o' this while Mr. Lejeune was a tellin' o' yow why Sir John made a difference atwixt yow and them. Now then, let's have that fust. Now what did he say?—that's the pint. *Why* was a difference made?"

"Because Sir John respected both you and me, and respected us more than the rest!"

"I can't have that," said Craske, "at all! He made a difference because he *respected* us!"

"Yes! And what was the difference he made? Why, instead of leaving me one hundred pounds, he left me *five*!—five hundred pounds! Now then," he added, tapping his father on the shoulder,—“Now then!—what do you think of that!”

"God's in Heaven!" said Craske. "Is it true?"

"True! aye as *true* as that God's in Heaven!"

"Soul and bones! Five hundred pound! Five hundred *pound*! Here fill that pipe," he added; "I'm bewildered. Five *hundered*! *five*!"

"What do you think of a strait jacket *now*!" cried Corney triumphantly. "I can take an inn now or a hundred acre farm, instead of keeping birds, can't I?"

"Stop, Corney, bor; yow marn't be too fast. Five hundered pound is a great sum for yow, but yow can't do everything with five hundered pound! Five hundered pound is soon *lost*, Corney, bor; but we'll talk about this another time. Then Mr. Lejeune *said* that Sir John respected me?"

"Yes, he said he respected you highly."

"God bless him! He was a good man, Corney,—a *good* man, and he's gone to Heaven."

"I hope so," said Corney,—“I hope so. But don't let us dwell on any sad subject now. What do you think of my marriage with Sarah?"

"Corney, bor, do nothn' in haste. Wait and see how things turn up, and then yow'll know how to act. The morthers' a nice morthers sartney, but don't yow be in a hurry. I s'pose when she offered yow half of hers she didn't know that yow'd had this money left yow?"

"Not a bit of it! She thought as they all thought, and as I thought too, that Sir John had clean forgot me."

"And had yow been a courtin' on her then?"

"No: until this blessed morning, I never said a syllable to her on the subject."

"Well, it was very handsome of her: it sartney was very handsome and very feelin', and I shall allus respect her for it; but wait, Corney, bor, and see how things go on. There's heaps o' time to marry."

"Oh, I shouldn't think of doing it in any particular haste. I want to have a little regular courting first. It's one of the luxuries of life, I find—universal and stunning!"

"Ah, bor! when I was young, courtin' was a different thing to what it is now. The morthers were so modest that yow could hardly get one on 'em to look at yer; and as for laughin' and chattin' and jokin', sich things was never thowt on. They was a'most afeard to open their mouths. I've sot wi' yowre poor mother for hours, and nayther o' both has said a word. I walked by her side for over two year afore she'd take hold o' my arm; as for sich a thing as a kiss, yow couldn't get em to let yer do it!—and if by chance yow happened to *steal* one, soul and bones, what a row there was!—not a row wi' the tongue, but a sulky row—they'd be for ever afore they'd make it up. A morthers' cheek at that time o' day was like the forbidden fruit we read on in Scriptur'. Besides, courtin' then was a work o' time—rangen' from ten to thirty year; but now its all done in the twinkin' of an eye! Yow see the morthers, yow make up yer mind, yow give her a kiss, and there yow are!"

"And a stunning plan too!" said Corney: "and very pleasant into the bargain. What's the good of going on and on for years and years? If you like a girl, and make up your mind to have her, have her at once, and have done with it!"

"Corney, bor, mark my words: there's a many as has married so as wishes they *could* ha' done with it! Yow don't gi' yerselves no time at all now to find out what the morthers is!"

"But how could you find out what they was by going on and on mumchancing for years? How could you tell what they was made of

if you couldn't get 'em to speak? That style of thing wouldn't suit me at all! It's a universal murdering of time!"

"Ah, bor! *yow* may talk together, but there's nothin' like the good old fashion ways arter all. We shall *never* see them times agin!"

"I *don't* suppose we ever shall. But look here: how about dinner? What have you got?"

"What! What, can yow stop and take a bit with us?"

"Of course!"

"Why didn't yow say so before? Why didn't yow say so when yow fust come *in*? Ann!" he added, shouting to his sister, who acted as housekeeper—"Ann!"

"Well, brother, well," said aunt Ann, coming forward.

"Here's a job! here's Corney and Sarah come to have a bit o' dinner with us: can't you let 'em have sussen nice?"

"Do yow leave that to me," replied aunt Ann. "I know all about it: don't yow interfere; I'll make 'em both as comfortable as I can. All yow have to do is to put that nasty pipe down, and then we sha'n't be quackled o' smoke while at dinner."

Very well! The mandate had gone forth, and down went the pipe; and presently Sarah, who made herself useful, came into the room, and laid the cloth.

"I like that," said Craske as she left the room to render aunt Ann some farther assistance. That looks well. She'll do. Can she charn?"

"She isn't the dairy-maid," replied Corney.

"That don't matter. No wife can be a wife which don't know how to charn. She must be larnt. She must come here a little and get yar aunt to larn her."

Aunt Ann now entered with a dish of eggs and bacon, and Sarah reappeared with the vegetables; and when Craske had said grace, they went to work, and manifested general joy.

"Have you got a drop of brandy in the house?" enquired Corney.

"No, bor," replied Craske, "we haven't; but I'll tell yow what we've got: we've got some elder wine which some brandy was put in it!"

"That'll do stunning!" cried Corney.

"Are yow fond of elder wine, dear?" enquired aunt Ann.

"Oh, it's delicious!" replied Sarah. "I love it!"

"Won't it be rayther too heavy for yow, dear, with eggs and bacon?"

"Oh, dear me! no, not at all!"

"Of course not!" said Corney. "Then do you get the wine, aunt, and I'll get the saucepan and mull it like life, and be jolly. Now, then," he added when the wine had been produced, "where are your spices? Oh, here you are! cloves, mace, cinnamon, nutmegs, and ginger. I'll show you how to mull wine. Now the sugar."

"Yow'll find it just inside the closet," said his aunt.

"Here you are: haven't you got any lump?"

"Dear me! not a mite in the house."

"This'll do. All right! Do you go on eating. Never mind me. I'll soon show you how to mull wine universal!"

"If we'd only a know'd you'd been a comin', dear," said aunt Ann to Sarah, "we'd ha' had sussen nice."

"Nothing *can* be nicer than this," returned Sarah. "I love eggs and bacon; they're my delight."

"We'd ha' had a jint of some sort," said Craske, "if we'd know'd it: 'a shoulder o' mutton, or sussen o' that.'"

"Or a nice duck," added aunt Ann; "or a nice pair o' chickens; or sussen. But I know yow'll excuse it—I know yow will; we only live in a humble way."

"Now don't say anything about it," said Sarah. "There's nothing I like more than this. I enjoy it much, and enjoy it the more because we never get it up at the Hall."

"Well, I hope yow do, dear."

"I do, indeed. See what a dinner I've eaten!"

"But yow ain't done yet!" said Craske, who would have said the same thing had she eaten three times as much. "Yow've taken nothin'!"

"I have done *very* well; I have, indeed," replied Sarah.

"Nonsense! Have another bit!"

"Not any more, I thank you. I've made a very hearty dinner indeed."

"But yow must have a leetle bit more!—there now, on'y jist this," said he, and forced upon her plate about as much as she had eaten.

"Now then," cried Corney, bringing forward the wine, "it *strikes* me you'll find this rayther universal! Now, my girl," he added, as he passed a glass to Sarah, "soop it up, and tell us what you think of it."

"Oh!" cried Sarah, having tasted it, "how nice—dear *me*, how nice, to be sure!"

"*Rayther* universal!" said Corney. "Eh!—isn't it?"

"Oh, it's delicious! I *never*!—dear me!"

"Soop it up—soop it up, my dear!" cried Craske.

"Oh, it's so strong! it's so *wonderful* strong!"

"Nice and hot, ain't it?" said Corney; "well spiced?"

"I can feel that little drop a running all over me. *Do* take half of it with me," she added, offering her glass to aunt Ann.

"Not a bit of it!" cried Corney. "Aunt's going to have a full glass to herself. Now then, governor, come!"

"No, bor. I never take nothin' but beer. But *won't* I have a glass!" he added on the instant. "Soul and bones! give us hold, Corney, bor. I'll drink it, if even it gets in my head. Here's God bless us all!" he continued, and drank; but he had no sooner taken the first gulp than he began to cough with violence, for Corney in his eagerness to have it "nice and hot," had made somewhat too free with the spices.

"What's the matter?" said Corney. "Did it walk the wrong way?"

"Corney, bor," replied Craske, as soon as he recovered the power to speak,—“Corney, bor, yow've peppered it too much.”

"Do you think so?"

"I don't think nothin' at all about it: I know it. It a'most took my breath away. I'm all of a muck o' sweat. Soul and bones! how hot it is!—my throat fears all on fire! Good luck to yow, give us a drop more beer. And when yow're married," he added, turning to Sarah, "don't yow let him cook any more mulled wine."

"Married!" cried aunt Ann. "Oh yow sly creatures! Married, and I to know nothin' about it!"

"We didn't know nothin' about it ourselves," said Corney, "'till this blessed morning."

"And yow," said aunt Ann, addressing Sarah with a smile, "even yow have been here wi' me over an hour and never dropped a syllable—*oh* yow sly thing!"

"I should," returned Sarah, "I *should* have done so, but Cornelius told me as we came here, that I was to tell my mother only."

"Well, now look you here, aunt," said Corney. "I didn't mean to keep it from *you*, I knew I couldn't if I'd wanted, but I didn't want: I knew the governor would tell you, of course. But you know it now, don't you? Very well then, you know it a'most as soon as we knew it ourselves."

"Well," said aunt Ann, "I hope yow'll be happy. I hope yow will with all my heart."

"Safe!" cried Corney, "safe to be happy."

"I hope so, Corney," returned aunt Ann. "But yow know nothin' about it yet."

"Look here, Ann," said Craske; "yow must larn her to charn. She must be larnt to charn."

"Bless you!" cried Sarah, "I know how to churn."

"Yow do?"

"Oh yes!"

"That'll do. Then yow'll answer the purpose. No wife's a wife which don't know how to charn."

"But how about this wine?" cried Corney. "Come, governor, try it again."

"Not if I *know* it, Corney, bor,—not if I know it."

"Well, it is to my mind universal. What do *you* think of it, aunt?"

"Oh!" said aunt Ann, "I can't drink it at all."

"Then I'll make some of moderate dimensions. You shall have some each."

"Then let's have it cold," said Craske, "as it is, cold. Yow're cooking don't suit my inside at all."

"Have it as you like, but this suits me stunning. There you are, governor. Now then, aunt, come!"

"Well," said aunt Ann, as she took the glass, "may every blessing attend yow both!"

"Amen!" cried Craske. "Amen!"

"Now," said Corney, "this is what I call a frolic!—a regular universal frolic!—and I wish I could stop ever so many hours with you; but I must be home, you know, to wait at table, and sullen like an hour before."

"That's right, Corney, bor; that's right!" said Craske. "Don't be over yowre time. Do what's right, and then yow'll allus be respected."

"I'm sure," said Sarah, "there's no one respected—and no one deserves to be respected—more than Cornelius is. We had proofs of that this morning."

"I know it," said Craske; "I know it, my dear. I'll tell yow all about it, Ann, when they are gone. It's a comfort to me: a great comfort. God bless him, and God bless Sir John, and God bless us all! Amen!"

"Cornelius," said aunt Ann, with feelings of pride, "I never told yow afore, but I'll tell yow now. Yow've been a good lad—a very good lad. Yow've kept yowre sittiwation, and been no trouble; and now yow see how yow're respected. I know'd that yow would be long ago; I allus said so, and my words ha' come true; and as sich, I've left yow what little I have."

"You allus was a good un!" cried Corney. "I allus thought so, and now yow've proved it. Why, governor, all the luck's come at once!"

"It allus does, bor," said Craske, "good or bad."

"But I'm loaded with luck."

"And yow'll *allus* be lucky," said his aunt, "if yow mind. Now," she continued, with the most perfect calmness, "the trifle o' money I have in the bank, I've preserved to pay the expenses of carrying me decently to the grave, when it shall please God to call me. There'll be suffen over to pay for the mournin', and suffen over that, which'll be yours. The three cottages o' mine will also be yowrs. They bring me in about sixteen pound ten shillings a year; for though I'm paid eighteen pound, it costs me all thirty shillin's out on it for repairs and whitewashin', and one thing or 'nother. I've got all the bills, and thank God they're all receipted; and yow'll see by them that it costs me all that. I'll just go and get 'em and show yow."

"We haven't time now, aunt," said Corney. "We'll have a careful look at 'em some other day."

"Well, as I was savin', eighteen pound—which is, yow know, six pound a-piece—and don't think o' raisin' the rent, nor whatever yow do don't distress the tenants. They're honest, though poor—I've allus found 'em so: if they can't pay one time they will another, and I'm sure they never wronged me of a farden in their lives."

"Very good!" cried Corney; "but yow're talking now as if yow were going to die off at once!"

"God knows! All must go when they're called; but I, in the natur' o' things, must go soon. But there's one thing I want now to press upon yowre mind—and, mark my words, yow'll find 'em come true:—Look through life not only at the money yow've got a comin' in, but also at the money yow've got a goin' out! Take perticular notice o' that, and yow never can go far wrong. Allus live within yowre comin's in—allus! Never go a penny beyond—never!—but get into the habit o' *savin'*, bor, and it's wonderful how it'll grow upon yow—wonderful!"

"I'll be as careful as a griffin!" cried Corney.

"Nor don't *lend* yowre money: yow men are so over fond o' lendin'. When they arks yow, tell 'em to arks yowre wife; and in ninety-nine cases out o' a hundred, they won't trouble her at all about it."

"I'll be careful," said Corney. "But come, time's up. Now, my girl, put on your things; there's a dear!"

Sarah rose and left the room with aunt Ann; and when they had done so, Craske said, "Now look here, Corney, bor; I should like yow to stop longer, sartney; but I shall at the same time be glad when yow're gone. I want to think—I want to sit quiet, an' smoke a pipe, an' think; for this five hundred pound has stunned me wholly! It's true he took a fancy to yow when yow was a mite: it's true he allus told me he'd take care on yer; but five hundred pound! Soul and bones! whoever on airth could ha' thought o' that!"

"I reckon his respect for you at half of it," said Corney.

"That makes me feel so happy in my mind! It's worth all the money to me to know he *did* respect me! God bless him for it! He was allus a good man: allus, Corney, allus! Now do yow make haste home, bor, when yow leave here. Give nobody no cause to complain o' yer now. Yow've gone on very well up to thisn, and it would be a pity to alter it now."

"I'll take care of that."

"Do, Corney, bor; an' let me see yow agin as soon as yow can come; and then I shall ha' turned the matter over in my mind! Good bye," he added as Sarah reappeared with aunt Ann. "God bless yow! God bless yow both! But recollect, Corney, bor, let there be nothin' wrong now!"

"All right!" said Corney, who, having taken an affectionate leave of his aunt, left the house with Sarah fondly clinging to his arm.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST OF POOR RICHARD LEJEUNE.

THAT evening Dr. Briggs drove in haste to the Hall, and had an interview with Charles for the purpose of communicating to him the fact that poor Richard Lejeune had become so exhausted that it was perfectly impossible for him to survive.

"He cannot," said the Doctor earnestly—"he cannot, I feel certain, live through the night; and therefore if Mr. Lejeune be anxious to see him again alive, he must come with me at once, and even then it may be too late."

"Is he calm?" enquired Charles.

"After a paroxysm he is for a time prostrate; but those paroxysms have become so frequent that it cannot be said that he is ever calm."

The very moment he has recovered sufficient strength to rave, he begins, and continues until he exhausts himself again."

"Then I really think that Mr. Lejeune had better not see him! He would go, I know, in an instant; but I look at the effect which such a sight might have upon him. They can have no communication with each other; that, of course, is out of the question entirely: while in his present precarious state of health, the shock might cost him his life."

"That," said the Doctor, "is precisely my view of the case; and hence I was anxious to consult you in private. The scene would to him, of course, be dreadful indeed; it is sufficiently so to those who are unconnected with him; and as he can do no good, but may, as you say, never recover from the shock, I agree with you that he had better receive no further intelligence until all is over."

"I will accompany you," said Charles. "I should like to see him once more. And perhaps it were as well that I should see the last of him; for Lejeune, I know, will be more satisfied if I do; and I shall moreover be able to explain to him all that we may think it necessary for him to know. George, too, would probably like to go. I'll ask him. Does poor Richard," he enquired as he rang the bell, "still entertain the idea of his being a warrior?"

"No," replied the Doctor, "it appears to have vanished. That upon which he now chiefly harps is the fact of his having been called a murderer."

"Doubtless some of our men," said Charles, "when he was secured, applied that epithet to him.—Cornelius," he added, as Corney entered the room, "tell my brother that I wish to see him. Is he with Mr. Lejeune still?"

"Yes sir," replied Corney.

"Well; you need not say that Dr. Briggs is here. Simply tell him that I wish to see him."

Corney bowed and withdrew, and shortly afterwards George appeared, pale and trembling; for although he had merely been told that Charles wished to see him, he was on the instant filled with apprehension."

"George," said Charles as he entered the room, "Dr. Briggs has just informed me that Richard Lejeune cannot live through the night. Now Lejeune must know nothing of this: were he to be told, he would go at once, and the scene would to him, of course, be dreadful; but as I feel sure that our presence during the last moments of his brother would be a source of satisfaction to him, I propose that we accompany Dr. Briggs."

"I do not feel well, Charles," said George. "Indeed I do not feel well."

"I know, my boy, I know, I know; and I wish that you had more nerve to bear up against these calamities; but you really must not continue to be thus dejected. Your words of consolation to me are quite lost upon yourself. We must feel it like men; but let us bear it like men: you really *must* not give way, George, to this excess of grief."

"I endeavour," said George, as tears sprang into his eyes—"I endeavour to be firm, but I *cannot*."

"Come, come, this will never do. I'll let them know that we are going somewhere, and then we'll accompany Dr. Briggs at once."

"I'd rather not go, Charles!"

"Oh, we had better go together!"

"Has his reason been restored?"

"No," replied Dr. Briggs, "nor will it ever be on earth."

"It is a shocking scene to witness."

"It is," said Charles, "it is indeed: but for Lejeune's sake go with us."

Well, George consented—reluctantly;—still he consented to go: and when Charles had told Lejeune, Juliana, and the Widow, that they were going a short distance and should return as soon as possible, they entered the Doctor's carriage and started.

The distance was soon accomplished, and on their arrival they proceeded at once to the room in which Richard was lying apparently dead.

The man in attendance held up his hand to enjoin silence,—a gesture which at the same time intimated to them that he was still alive.

"You are but just in time," whispered the Doctor to Charles. "He has just had a paroxysm which I think must be his last."

They stood for some time and gazed upon him, and expected him every moment to expire: but presently his eyes, which had been fixed and meaningless, lighted up with surpassing brilliancy into an expression of rapture, and he cried with energy, "There!—There!—There are the angels! See!—If I were a murderer could I meet their gaze? No! their looks would blast me! Could I stand thus before them if I were a murderer? I am *not* a murderer! they know it, and they smile! Hark!—Hark!—Listen to their voices!—This is celestial music indeed! How sweetly soft!—how heavenly!—how full of deep and tranquil joy! See!—they beckon me!—beckon me into their pure presence! Would they do this if I were a murderer? Dare I—dare I go?—*dare* I! They beckon me still! They approach me!—surround me! Am I—*am* I a murderer now! See! A bright vista opens before me, and there sits the Great God Himself! What majesty!—what glory!—what awe-inspiring grandeur! and yet how beneficent and tranquil are His looks! Hark! the Holy Hosts hail me with rapture! Oh! this is bliss indeed! Father," he added, in faint tones of deep solemnity, "prostrate before Thee, I acknowledge my transgressions, but Thou knowest that I am not a murderer."

These were the last words he uttered. For some moments his lips continued to move as if in prayer, and then he ceased to breathe.

Charles was deeply affected, while George—although he shed no tear—trembled from head to foot. He could not indeed sustain himself, so violent was the tremour induced by the awful exclamations of poor Richard; and when Charles and the Doctor had led him from the room, he begged of them to give him some brandy.

This the Doctor procured immediately, and placed before him; but

he could neither pour it out, nor lift it to his mouth when the glass had been filled for him. The Doctor therefore held it to his lips while he drank, and marvelled that the scene should have had so *peculiar* an effect upon him. Had he wept, it would have been held to be but natural; but this violent tremour the Doctor couldn't understand.

"The slightest thing now," said George, "affects my nerves; but this was an awful scene indeed!"

"Had I imagined," returned Charles, "that it would have had such an effect as *this* upon you, I would not have urged you to witness it."

"This tremour, Charles, will pass off presently."

"I hope so, my boy—I hope so," said Charles, who had then some conversation with the Doctor on the subject of the coroner's warrant; and when George felt sufficiently firm, he and Charles returned, almost in silence, to the Hall.

On their arrival George retired immediately to his room, and was seen that night no more; but Charles rejoined Lejeune, Juliana, and the Widow,—resolved, however, on saying nothing having reference to the death of Richard until the morning, when Lejeune himself opened the subject by observing that Dr. Briggs had not sent to let them know how Richard was.

"The case, I fear, is hopeless," said Charles cautiously. "Indeed Dr. Briggs has frequently assured me that his recovery is, humanly speaking, impossible; that his reason can never, except by a miracle, be restored."

"If it be so," returned Lejeune, "death were preferable to life. I'd rather, Charles, hear of his death at once than know that he must be thus perpetually tortured."

"I feel," rejoined Charles, "that if I were in your position, the announcement of his death would, under the circumstances, be a relief to me."

"It would, Charles: it would, indeed!"

"I am glad," said Charles, "to hear you say so."

Lejeune looked at him earnestly, and then enquired why.

"Because," replied Charles, with an expression of solemnity, "he is indeed no more!"

"Indeed!" said Lejeune with a convulsive start as he looked at Charles intently. "Indeed!"

"He died in my presence last night," continued Charles; "and a sweet death it was! He died, not only in peace and without a groan or struggle, but with the perfect conviction that his spirit was in Heaven."

Lejeune wept in silence, but after a pause said, "Had he his reason restored for one moment?"

"It appeared to me," replied Charles, "that he *had*; but his whole soul was centred in the vision before him. He conceived that he was then in the presence of the Most High, surrounded by angels, who approached and embraced him: he conceived that he heard the holy choir hail him with rapture!—and while he was, in imagination,

before the Throne of Grace, he breathed a short prayer, and expired."

"My dear Charles," said Lejeune very faintly, as the big tears continued to roll, "I will, for a short time, retire."

Charles offered him his arm, which he took, and proceeded to his chamber, where, when alone, he sank upon his knees, and prayed fervently.

The sad intelligence had now to be communicated to Juliana, and as Charles believed that the Widow would be able to manage it better than he could himself, he proceeded to tell her all that he had explained to Lejeune, and to beg of her to break it to Juliana as cautiously as possible.

"If you find," he added, "that she is not prepared to receive this intelligence, it need not be communicated now. It may be deferred; there's no necessity for doing it hastily, although she must, of course, shortly know all."

"I understand," returned the Widow—"I quite understand you. I will do it with the utmost care."

She then ordered her phaeton, and took Juliana for a drive; and as they passed the residence of Dr. Briggs she observed, "There is some one dead there, it appears: all the blinds are down: perhaps one of the patients."

"That," said Juliana, "is Dr. Briggs's, is it not?"

"Yes, dear," replied the Widow. "That is his house. One of the patients, doubtless, has been happily released,—for death must be regarded as a happy release by the friends of every insane person whose case is hopeless."

"My poor uncle's case is not, I believe, considered hopeless."

"Oh, perfectly so!" returned the Widow. "There is not the slightest chance of his recovery."

"Dear me! I never before knew that."

"Dr. Briggs sees no prospect whatever of his reason being restored."

"Good gracious! Why that is very dreadful!"

"It is, my dear—it is very dreadful; and therefore I say that in all such cases death ought to be considered a happy release."

"But I really had no idea of his case being so hopeless!"

"It is so, I assure you,—perfectly hopeless; and if he were an uncle or a brother of mine, I should regard his death as a merciful intervention of Divine Providence. Conceive how horrible it must be for a person to live in a place like that from month to month, and from year to year, not only without a single ray of reason, but without the slightest prospect of his reason ever being restored! Why he is, in such a case, already dead to the world. What is the world to him? He sees nothing of it: he knows nothing of it. He is perfectly unconscious of everything around him. His brain continues to whirl and burn, and thus his life is worn away! Why, surely, whenever it pleases God to take the soul of such a person to Himself, and thus to release it from a tenement so wretched, it ought to be held by the survivors to be a blessing."

"Certainly," said Juliana—"certainly if I thought that he could never recover—if it were indeed a hopeless case—if it were *known* that he must linger through life in a state so frightful even to contemplate,—I *should*—although it would be a shock to me—I *should*, if he were at once released from his affliction, hold it to be an act of divine mercy."

"Of course, my dear,—of course you would! and as it has been well ascertained that your poor uncle's reason can never on earth be restored—"

"Has this been ascertained—absolutely ascertained?"

"It has, my dear, beyond all doubt; and therefore the intelligence of his death—instead of shocking our feelings—ought to be received by us with thankfulness."

"But when was this known?" enquired Juliana earnestly.

"It was proved, my dear, beyond all question, last night."

"And was he very ill—I mean bodily?"

"Oh, he has been very ill for some days!"

"Dear me! then perhaps it is *he* that is dead!"

"It is not impossible, my dear: it is anything but impossible!"

"Shall we turn, dear?" said Juliana, anxiously, as the tears began to glisten in her eyes—"shall we turn and enquire?"

"As you please," replied the Widow, by whom these tears were noticed; "but we are now as near to the Hall as we are to Dr. Briggs's, and as the Doctor would of course send the intelligence up immediately, I think that we had better at once drive home."

"Do so, dear—do so: I really begin to think that poor uncle is no more!"

"And if it be so," returned the Widow, "we ought to be grateful indeed!"

Perceiving Juliana's anxiety, the Widow now urged her ponies on, and as they approached the Hall she exclaimed, "See, love, our blinds are down too!"

"Then it is so," returned Juliana. "It is so."

"Then, my dear, for this act of mercy we cannot be too thankful."

Juliana wept, and Charles, who had been anxiously watching their approach, came out to receive them; and having assisted them to alight, led them into the library.

"Our blinds are down," said the Widow, who was the first to speak, "and as we passed the house of Dr. Briggs, we saw his blinds down too."

"Is he," enquired Juliana earnestly—"is my dear uncle dead?"

"My love," replied Charles, "you will be consoled to hear that he died in the full conviction that his spirit was in Heaven."

Juliana—for whom the voice of Charles had a peculiar charm—clung to him, and looked at him intently through her tears.

"He died," pursued Charles, "last night. I was present at the time."

"You were?"

"Yes; and a more enchanting vision than that which he beheld just before he ceased to breathe, cannot possibly be imagined."

"He died last night in *your* presence?"

"George and I left you for a time—"

"I remember—I see—yes. And *did* he die happy?"

"Happy! He felt that he was in Heaven—surrounded by the angels—caressed by them—hailed with rapture! Happy! If the conviction of having attained that bliss which is our highest aim be happiness, then he died happy indeed! We'll not, however, dwell upon this now," he added, perceiving that Juliana's tears were flowing fast. "We have to be thankful that his soul has been released from that dreadful calamity by which it was enthralled."

"Does papa know of this?" enquired Juliana anxiously.

"He does," replied Charles; "and he is comforted by the conviction of your uncle's case having been hopeless.—Mrs. Wardle," he added, with the view of turning Juliana's thoughts from the subject which then engrossed them, "were you ever in Italy?"

"Never," replied the Widow; "but I have always understood it to be a most delightful country."

"It is indeed a delightful country: and now I'll tell you what I have been thinking of this morning.—Come, my love," he added, taking Juliana's hand, and drawing her arm within his—"come, come, dry those eyes and listen. We have of late," he continued, "witnessed nothing but scenes of sadness, and as a change will, I feel sure, be highly beneficial to us all, I have been thinking that immediately after your uncle's funeral we cannot do better than go to Italy for a time, in order that the health of your papa, and our spirits, may be recruited."

"Oh, I should dearly like to go," said the Widow, more with the view of alleviating the sorrow of Juliana, than of impressing upon Charles that she was delighted with the proposition. "And you, my dear," she added, "I am sure would be charmed. It is such a lovely country! Besides, our residence there for a time would restore your papa to health."

"If it could have that effect," said Juliana, "I should indeed be happy to go."

"Oh, the beautiful climate would soon bring him round. And then the lakes, and the Alps, and the Apennines, and Etna and Vesuvius!—there are thousands of objects in that sweet country calculated to charm all by whom it is visited."

"We shall take our hearts with us, of course," said Charles; "but the change will at least tend to raise our spirits. You may therefore prepare as soon as you please. There are plenty of books here having reference to Italy; and while you are getting them together, I'll go and name the subject to Mr. Lejeune." And having thus supplied Juliana with something more to think of than her uncle's death, he left her again in the Widow's hands.

Now while *they* were thus conversing, George was writing to D'Almaine, who had become exceedingly pressing for the five hundred

pounds for which he held George's I O U. He had not then heard of Sir John's death. It had been fully reported in all the papers, it is true; but sporting men, in general, live in a world of their own, and beyond that "world" know nothing. George, therefore, supplied this information, and having stated that things were of course then in an unsettled state, promised to send him the money as soon as possible.

This letter had scarcely been finished when George received a note from Jane, which ran as follows:—

"SIR,

"I am about to leave this part of the country for a time, and as I wish to have *one* question answered before I leave, you may, if you please, call upon me between the hours of two and four.

I am, sir,

"JANE FREEMAN."

"Does the person who brought this note wait for an answer?" he enquired.

"He is not yet gone, sir," replied the servant; "but he doesn't know whether it requires an answer or not."

"Tell him to say that I'll attend to it."

The servant withdrew, and George endeavoured to conceive what she meant.

"*One* question!" said he. "What question is that? What *can* she want to know? What can I tell her with reference to the deed that she does not know already? She may perhaps want to know if I really meant to marry her, when I deputed Farquar to propose marriage to her. If so, of course my answer is, Yes. I'll marry her now, and thus deprive her at once of the power of giving evidence against me. She says that she is about to leave for a time. Does she want me to leave with her, and to marry her at a distance? If so, I'll do it—I'll do any thing in order to secure her. She said that she would never consent to this marriage. But she may have altered her mind. I hope that she has: I hope so because I shall otherwise never feel safe. I'll go to her. It is now half past one: I'll go at once, and if I find that she has been tempted to reverse her decision, I can defy her, and thus feel comparatively happy."

He rang the bell and ordered his horse, and when it was ready, he mounted and slowly rode over to Freeman's.

Jane, who felt sure that he would be there soon after two o'clock was on the watch, and as he approached she felt tremulous and faint. She nerved herself, however, to receive him with becoming spirit, and as he entered the room in which she was standing, she regarded his abject bearing with contempt.

"You wished to see me, Jane," said he, with an expression of conscious guilt. "You wish to have a question answered. What is that question?"

"I have understood, Sir," replied Jane firmly, "that if any one should know of a crime having been committed, and should fail to denounce him who committed that crime, he or she is held to be

criminal in the second degree, as an accessory after the fact. Now," she continued, as George trembled with apprehension, "the question I wish to have answered is this: Are you sure—quite sure—that you have *nerve* enough to conceal your horrible guilt effectually?"

"*Nerve* enough?" said George, who began to fear that she had made up her mind to denounce him—"nerve enough?"

"Aye, sir, *nerve* enough!" replied Jane.

"Can you doubt it?"

"Yes! I hear that when you were present last night at the death of poor Mr. Lejeune you trembled with so much violence that they were compelled to support you."

"Why, who could have told you that?"

"No matter. I heard of it, and you know it to be true."

"It is true; I certainly was almost overpowered. But then what a scene it was to witness!"

"I am not astonished at your having been thus affected, although they were,—not knowing the real cause. Had the secret burst forth—had your conscience prompted you to proclaim your guilt there—I should not have been amazed; but if these fits of remorse assail you with so much violence as to deprive you of all *command* over yourself, it is high time, sir, for me to act,—not only with a view to my own safety, but for the sake of my child!"

"Jane!" he exclaimed imploringly, as he sank on his knee before her, "have mercy!"

"Rise, sir! for while in that position you remind me of those impious vows which you taught me to believe were registered in Heaven! I repeat that if these violent fits of remorse are to lead to a confession of your guilt, it is time for me to act!"

"But they *never* will! It is true last night I was nearly overpowered; but such a scene can never occur again! But even then, although I was for a moment physically powerless, I was throughout morally firm. No; whatever my feelings of remorse may be, they will never lead to such a result. Nothing, Jane," he added in tones of deep emotion—"nothing but the conviction—the full conviction—that I *never* shall succeed in prevailing upon you to consent to our marriage, can drive me to such madness as that!"

"What! are you not fully convinced of this yet?"

"No, Jane, no!—I still have hope!—and to that hope I cling most fondly. Be merciful, Jane! drive me not to despair! That I love you still devotedly, you must—you *must* believe. I never for a moment ceased to love you. Even in those notes—those wretched notes which I was, unhappily, induced to send you, I did not—I could not deny that I loved you ardently still. Drive me not, Jane, to the madness of despair! The result of *that* madness who can tell? For your own safety—for the sake of our child, Jane—let me implore you to reverse your decision!"

"Sir!" said Jane, with all the sternness at her command, "*my* safety shall be ensured by other means."

"But it cannot, believe me, be by other means ensured. If I

should be driven to despair, if—reckless of life, because deprived of all hope—I, in a moment of frenzy, *should* cause our dreadful secret to be revealed, you, Jane, would be involved with me, the thought of which alone is torture.”

“I regard that as a threat, sir, and treat it with contempt.”

“Indeed, Jane, you wrong me. A threat!—no. “Your safety,” he added in tremulous accents—“your safety is *dear* to me, Jane, and my object is to show that our marriage would ensure it.”

“And *my* object, sir,” returned Jane, assuming an air of command, “is to show that it *can* be by other means ensured, sir,—and *SHALL*! You must leave England for ever!”

“Leave England for ever!” echoed George, whom the announcement struck at once with amazement and alarm. “Leave England for ever! Surely there can be no necessity for that?”

“There is a necessity for it, sir! My safety—which is so very *dear* to you—demands it. It must be done, or all must be known. It is now for you to decide,—and that decision I must have within a week. And now,” she added on ringing the bell, “our conference is at an end!”

“But surely,” said George, who felt perfectly bewildered—“surely you do not mean this?”

“I do,” replied Jane; “and by this day week I must have your decision.—Mary,” she added, as the servant entered, “the door.” And having bowed slightly to George, she left the room.

“Leave England for ever!” thought George, who stood as if thunderstruck for a time. “Leave England for ever! This must be dwelt upon deeply!”

The servant, who was still at the door, slightly coughed, and George, whom this signal aroused, left the house.

“Now,” said he, as he rode away thoughtfully, “how am I to act? She is afraid that I shall reveal the secret, and thus involve *her*; and in order to ensure her own safety, she has made this monstrous proposition, and that in tones of almost absolute command. ‘You *must* leave England for ever!’ I have imparted the spirit of a devil, I find, to one who was as gentle as an angel, and I am now called upon to subdue it. Leave England for ever! She seems resolved to exercise her power with vengeance. ‘It must be done, or all must be known!’ I have therefore to choose between hanging and transportation for life. The alternative is pleasant certainly; but what’s to be done? Am I to run the risk of being hanged by defying her power? *Need* I defy her power? No: I feel that this may be otherwise managed. At all events the idea of leaving England must not for one moment be entertained. There would then be an end of everything. All the plans which I have conceived for the recovery of the estate—which in my position as Steward I feel convinced I can accomplish—will be valueless. No! here I’ll stand or fall! I’ll *not* leave England!—nor will I openly defy her power. If I *were* to do so, I do not believe that she would denounce me!—she has said that she could not denounce the father of her child. But even if she should,

her evidence is unsupported, and may be ascribed, very naturally, to hatred engendered by a deep sense of wrong. But then the accusation alone would destroy me—it would at least destroy my dearest hopes; for if even I were not convicted, the efforts which I have recently made to induce her to consent to our marriage would stamp her tale with the semblance of truth. No: this must not be tried. I refused to marry her, and hence her hatred: so far that would do. But subsequently—notwithstanding her situation—she has refused to marry me! And why? Why, the natural inference would be, because she knew that I had done this deed. Inferences, of course, will not do alone; but they all tend to strengthen conviction. No, she must not be defied. I must work the tigress in some other way, and if fair means should fail, I'll compass her destruction. I'll not be thus perpetually tortured with apprehension. While *she* lives, I can never be safe. I feel sure [of it now!—quite sure—there never was a woman more desperately in earnest. She still carries pistols, I perceive: I saw the shape of them to-day in her bosom, and doubtless she now has them constantly with her. Well, madam!—well! If I could but get you to meet me, madam—or if I could but catch you away from the house—I'd make one of them useful; for having despatched you, I'd make you grasp your weapon, and the interesting nature of your present situation would sufficiently account for the 'suicide!' We shall see. She has given me a week to decide. Well, much may be done in a week. We shall see. Leave England! forsooth! Why if even I were to leave England, I should still be in constant dread; I should never feel safe! Let me go where I might, the law would reach me, and she might at any time be prompted to denounce me; while the very fact of my leaving the country would be a collateral proof of my guilt! No, Miss Freeman, I'll not leave England. I'll marry you, my lady, if you please—and a very happy time you shall have of it too, until I see a chance of removing you for ever; but your sentence of transportation for life will not be carried into effect, I assure you. Who could have told her of my contemptible weakness last night? The Doctor? No—no, I should say not. Perhaps one of the servants spoke of it! Very likely. I was a fool—a consummate fool! It was that which alarmed her. No matter. This proposition must be met. It must be met with tact and energy. I'll *not* live thus in continual dread! By *some* means she must be removed!"

Having reached home and given his horse to one of the grooms, he was about to enter the house, when Charles, who had been conversing with the Widow, approached him, and said, "George, my dear boy, I've been suggesting to Lejeune, Juliana, and Mrs. Wardle, that as a change of scene would be highly beneficial to them all, it would be advisable for them to leave England for a time; and as they appeared to be willing to act upon this suggestion, I have proposed that almost immediately after the funeral of poor Richard, we start for Italy. Would you like to go?"

"I have no desire to go," replied George. "Besides, it will be necessary for me to be at home."

"Nay," said Charles; if you would like to accompany us, the improvements you contemplate can be for a time deferred."

"But I really have no desire to go."

"Very well. Then we must leave you here. We shall of course frequently communicate with each other, and you will manage the estate precisely as if it were your own."

"Be assured, my dear Charles, that I will do the best I can."

"Of that I am assured, George—perfectly assured. As I said when we entered into our arrangement, I leave it entirely in your hands, and that with the most implicit confidence in your judgment. That the estate is capable of great improvement, I have not the slightest doubt: you have indeed convinced me of that; and all I wish to impress upon you is, my anxiety to have nothing done prejudicial to the interests of the old tenants."

"Their interests, as well as yours, shall be my care," returned George. "All that I can do to promote them shall be done."

"Very good," said Charles, taking his arm and leading him into the house. "That's all I wish to say on the subject."

This met the views of George precisely. The announcement of Charles's intention to go abroad inspired him at once with new life. He was delighted with the prospect of having the entire management of the estate, without the slightest supervision or control, for it gave him the power of at once commencing his plan of operations—his design being to effect the utter ruin of Charles, by gradually working the estate into his own hands.

The accomplishment of this object he knew, of course, demanded no ordinary amount of tact, judgment, and caution; but he felt that he was able to meet that demand, and resolved on devoting all his energies to the task.

Jane alone stood in his path, and her removal appeared to him to be essential to success. He felt perfectly sure then that she would never consent to marry him; and as she alone knew of his guilt, and would of necessity keep him, while she lived, in a state of perpetual apprehension, he resolutely made up his mind to destroy her.

To effect this—which involved, of course, the murder of his own child!—he went armed day after day, and concealed himself near the house for hours panting for her to approach alone one of those walks in which she formerly delighted to meet him. But those walks were deserted by her then, independently of which—conceiving that she *might* be assailed—she never went out unaccompanied by her father.

Thus he was foiled, and the week passed away; and the next time he saw her was at church, when the remains of poor Richard Lejeune were consigned to a vault beside that of Sir John.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEPARTURE FOR ITALY.

THE day after Richard Lejeune's funeral, George received a note from Jane, reminding him that the week had expired; and when he had decided upon the course which, under the circumstances, he thought it would be wise to pursue, he rode over, and Jane received him as firmly as before.

"I hope that you are well, Jane," said George as he entered.

"Do you not," returned Jane, "rather wish that I were dead?"

"No, Jane,"—replied George in tremulous tones—"no, believe me. Although I am in your power, I feel that you cannot exercise it tyrannously, while your *death*, Jane, would blast my hopes indeed!"

"The hopes to which I presume you allude, have been, I should have thought, already blasted."

"No, Jane: if even you drive me into exile, I shall hope still—*still* hope to be recalled."

Jane felt her firmness giving way; but she nerved herself again, and said, "Well, sir, have you decided?"

"I have," replied George, with a well assumed expression of resignation. "I have decided on submitting to your will. But when I have explained to you the nature of my present position, you will perceive that my departure must of necessity be deferred."

"Sir! there must be no delay. I cannot feel for an hour safe. I know your subtlety, and hence expected that something would be devised with the view of gaining time; but as I find that my position is more dangerous than I imagined, there *must* be no delay."

"Jane," said George earnestly, "listen. My brother and Mr. Lejeune, accompanied by the ladies, are about to start for Italy: they leave the Hall to-morrow; and I, being still the Steward, must remain here to manage the estate—at least, until they return."

"Oh! then you suggested this visit to Italy, in order that you might have some excuse for remaining?"

"No, Jane, no!—indeed I did not. It was, upon my honour, suggested by Charles."

"Of course," said Jane, with a smile of contempt, "upon your *honour* I am bound to believe you."

"Jane, Jane, you wring my heart. It *was* his suggestion, not mine."

"And did he not wish you to accompany him?"

"Well," replied George, who suspected that some one had informed her of the fact, "he certainly did ask me if I should like to go."

"And thus proved that your presence here was not held by him to be absolutely necessary!"

"Say, rather, that his *kindness* prompted him to propose it."

"But there *is* no necessity—no absolute necessity—for you to remain here even during his absence."

"The estate, Jane, has to be improved, and I must remain to superintend those improvements."

"Cannot some other person be appointed? To me the case is desperate! I *know* that in one of your phrenzies—in one of your paroxysms of remorse—you will reveal that secret which will consign you to the scaffold, and me to perpetual exile! I am sure of it!"

"No, Jane; no!" cried George with energy, "*never will that secret be by me revealed!*"

"Sir, I know too much of you to attach even the slightest importance to what you say. I feel convinced that this *will* be the result, and therefore require you to accompany your brother. I'll endure no longer these tortures of apprehension. Your brother wishes you to accompany him. Do so. Go, sir; and never let me see your face again!"

"But I cannot go!"

"You must!"

"I *will* not go till he returns."

"Then, sir, you know what follows."

"What! will you denounce me?"

"I will!"

"You dare not do it."

"Dare not!"

"No!"

"You'll see. It is not my own safety alone that I regard; but rather than cause a father's heart to be broken, I'd denounce a hundred men like you, and feel that I had done my duty."

"Jane," said George, in tones of intense earnestness, "there is a point beyond which a man *will* not be driven—there is a point at which he will stop and turn and boldly *brave* destruction! To this point you have driven *me*, and hence I say that you dare not denounce me! And why? Not because you have not the power to destroy me, for you, and you alone, possess that power; not because you have not the spirit to do it, for I find that you have the spirit of a tigress; but because you have not the *heart* to do it!—for I know that you have a heart, Jane, although, unhappily, it beats not for me. You have not the soul to do it!—nor have you so reckless a contempt for that agony of which such an act would be the germ! You denounce me. Well: you save yourself—I know not whether you *could* do so now—but let it be so—you save yourself. But could you ever be happy again? You denounce him who loves you ardently—say you'll not believe it—say that you will not—you denounce the father of your child! While that child, Jane, in its purest innocence, is clinging to its mother's breast, at once deriving and imparting delight, will it not be a sweet reflection, Jane, that you, its mother, and you alone, consigned its father, who loved you fondly and would have cherished it, to the bloody scaffold! It grows, and you watch its growth with feelings of ecstasy. Perhaps it bears some resemblance to him—perhaps, in order to torture you the more, the resemblance is striking. Well! When you gaze upon it with feelings of pride, and smooth its hair, and

caress it with rapture, and listen with delight to its innocent prattle, will not additional *joy* spring from the remembrance that you, and you alone, with cold-blooded heartlessness, delivered its father into the hangman's hands? The child grows up, and its father's fate can be concealed no longer: it knows that you, without necessity, brought me to an ignominious end! If it be a boy, what will be his feelings? Will he love you for it? *Love* you! Why he will loathe you! And if it be a girl, what will be her prospects?—what her fate? She ascertains that her father was hanged, and that her mother was—Jane, Jane!"—he added, as she burst into tears—"reflect upon the tortures you would have to endure! Denounce me, and prepare to feel the torments of the damned! If you care not for your *own* heart being withered, have some sense of feeling for your offspring! Will you, can you, brave these terrors, for the purpose of being revenged upon me? If you do not love me—if you never did love me—pause before you plunge into this abyss of horror. If you do it, you do it recklessly—gratuitously! There is no necessity for it: *your* safety does not demand it. All the misery you would thus engender may by silence be averted; and whether you marry me or *not*, Jane, to you and yours I will ever be kind."

Jane, who wept bitterly, rose and left the room; and shortly afterwards the servant brought him the following note, which had been evidently written with a trembling hand:—

"SIR,

"Our interview is at an end.

"JANE FREEMAN."

Having read this note, George smiled triumphantly, and almost immediately left the house.

"Now," said he, having passed the gate. "*Now* I feel that I am secure! The father of her child!—I touched her there. This is better than *killing*! I have no wish to destroy her—all I want is to be secure: I have enough blood on my conscience already. Conscience!—Away with it! Fool," he added thoughtfully, "to talk thus—fool! Who can repudiate it? Who can destroy it? Who, in reality, can hold it in contempt? It is the spirit of the devil working within us, to give us a taste of his torments on earth. We have no command over it—there it is: a tyrant, whose power is absolute, torturing us at will. Away with *conscience*! Fool!—fool! More blood would increase those tortures, and hence it is well to avoid it. I want only to be safe, and I feel that I am safe now. The child is my security. But if it should die? Perish the thought!—Again you are a *fool*. The thought will live as long as the child. It were, however, useless now to speculate on that. It *may* die; and if it should, why some other security must be thought of. Had she not left the room, I think that I might have persuaded her to marry. She loves me still, I *perceive*! She may disguise, but she cannot destroy *that* feeling; and therefore, if even the child should die, I shall have that to work upon still."

On his return to the Hall, he found Charles engaged in completing the arrangements for his departure in the morning; and when Charles had made a few additional suggestions—for he gave no *instructions* whatever—having reference to the estate, George enquired which of the servants he intended to take with him.

"Dear me!" replied Charles, "I never thought of that: Juliana, of course, will take her own maid; but—let me see—I should like to take Cornelius."

"Will he go?" enquired George.

"I should say so!"

"He's a man of property now!" suggested George with a smile.

"Well, we'll ask him, at all events," said Charles; who at once rang the bell, which Corney, with his characteristic promptitude, answered.

"Cornelius," continued Charles, "you are of course aware that I am going abroad for a time. Would you like to go with me?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" replied Corney; "yes, that I *should*!"

"Very well. I forgot to name it to you before, but there is yet plenty of time for you to make whatever little preparations you may deem necessary. You can have the remainder of the day to yourself. We start in the morning."

Corney bowed and withdrew, and went immediately to Sarah, and made a sign for her to follow him, which she did with a smile; and having led her into one of the drawing-rooms, he kissed her, and said with a feeling of pride, "Sally, my love, what do you think? I'm going abroad—I'm going to Italy—I'm going with Mr. Charles! He's just asked me, and—we start to-morrow."

Sarah turned as pale as death, and clung to his arm, and trembled.

"Why, what's the matter?" he continued. "Don't you like me to go?"

"How far is this Italy from here?" she enquired.

"Why, I don't know exactly how many miles, but it's something like a variety of thousands. I shouldn't be able to find it myself, because it's somewhere about the other end of the world. But the ship knows the way: that'll take us right enough."

"What have you, then, to cross the sea?"

"Cross the sea? Yes. What of that? Who's afraid?"

"But you may be drowned, or a thousand things!"

"Drowned! Why should I be drowned any more than any other man in life? Other men cross the sea—millions of 'em—without being drowned, and why shouldn't I?"

"Yes, dear, but see what dreadful shipwrecks we read of which couldn't occur upon land."

"Shipwrecks! Look here:—is it likely—is it even half likely—that Mr. Charles, and Mr. Lejeune, and Miss Lejeune, and Mrs. Wardle would go if they thought they were going to be shipwrecked?"

"No, dear, not if they *thought* they should! But shipwrecks come so unexpected! I'm sure it was only the other day, dear, I was reading of a shipwreck in a book where the ship went down, and the

men in the boat cast lots to see which should be killed and eaten by the others. Now you know that's very shocking, Cornelius!"

"Don't trouble your sentiments at all about shipwrecks or anything of that. *We* shall be all right, and when I come back I'll marry you, Sally my love, stunning!"

"But suppose you should never come back, Cornelius? What would become of me then?"

"Don't trouble your head about any such rubbish. I tell you I'm safe to come back. Can't you believe me?"

"Yes, dear Cornelius, yes," replied Sarah, tremulously, as she burst into tears. "I can believe, dear, any thing you say, when I know that you know what you're saying is right. But you can't know, dear, what may occur: you can't tell what may happen at sea. The ship may go and split upon a rock, or it may be swallowed up in an everlasting gulph, or it may even catch fire, Cornelius."

"Well, if it should, there'll be plenty of water to put it out—we shan't have to go far for that! But don't think of any thing at all of the sort. Think of the universal feelings I shall have for you when I come back, Sally. That'll be the time! Why I shall be fit to eat you! Absence makes them feelings more sharper. Look at a man which hasn't had a dinner for a serious variety of days. Won't he shake a rump steak by the collar when he gets it! Why he'll take and eat it with veracity! And I shall be ready to take and eat you. I'll tell you what's o'clock when I come back—you shall know the time to a minute! Besides, these foreign parts opens a man's sensibilities, stretches his sentiments, and walks into his mind! It makes him about five-and-twenty times a man, and fit to converse with the nobbiest in nature! He sees life—a man which goes to foreign parts does—real and universal life!—and knows more when he comes back than he'd learn *here* in two eternities. It's wonderful what a man which travels picks up. You should only hear one of 'em talk, that's all. There's no such a thing as a finish to it. He'll go on and on, as if his tongue was immortal, and make your hair stand up on end."

"But you don't want to go to learn to talk, dear," said Sarah; "you are able to talk very beautiful now!"

"Can't come it anything like what they can, and so you'll say when I return. I'll tell you all about the real Bengal tigers, and regular rhinoceroses, and all that; and exprotricate about the live natives which are allowed to have as many naked wives as they like—which is different to what it is here in this country, where one's thought enough; and the sea, and the rocks, and the lakes, and the mountains without any top to 'em at all, but going up into the other world, and clean through it, and—"

"Well, dear," said Sarah, breaking the chain of his eloquence, "but you can talk about all this now; and as for the naked wives you speak of, I'm sure it's a shame it's allowed. I wouldn't see such undecent sights; they're right on disgraceful to be beheld—the bold *indelicate* creatures! I'm sure they're not fit for a Christian to see."

"Oh, it's thought nothing of there! they all do it and save the

expense of clothes. If they didn't, how would a man support such a mob of wives? If they all dressed there as they dress out here, a man would want a mint to pay for petticoats alone!"

"Then they oughtn't to have so many," returned Sarah, with a feeling of virtuous indignation. "If they can't afford to keep them decent, they oughtn't, in fact, to have any at all. I wonder they're not ashamed of themselves! For my part, I'd make them lie a-bed all day: they *never* should go out so."

"*They* don't care a mite about it: they're used to it."

"Then they ought to live by themselves. If I'd my will, I'd shut up the country, and let no Christians in at all. It's right on shocking to think of, and if I were you, Cornelius, I wouldn't go and see such indelicate sights."

"Oh, I must go," said Corney. "I told Mr. Charles that I'd go."

"I wish you wouldn't, Cornelius, dear."

"Don't you be a mite alarmed. You may take your oath I shan't fall in love with any of *that* lot."

"No, dear, I'm not in the least afraid of that; but I really wish you wouldn't go, dear."

"Why, we can write to each other like life! You'll see what stunning letters I'll send you! *I'll* tell you what's o'clock in them letters! *I'll* walk into your sensibilities. *I'll* show you how many feelings make five, and how universal one heart can feel for another. *You'll* see! You'll have nothing to do while I am gone, but to be on the look out for letters."

"But what do you want to go at all for, dear? You don't want to be any longer in service."

"No, Sally; no, my love: I know I'm independent,—independent of service, at least; but I can't bear, you know, to be ungrateful. Why didn't Mr. Charles ask James or William or John to go with him? Why, because he wished *me* to go, and me alone. Wouldn't it have been ungrateful, Sally, my love, if after all Sir John has done for me, I'd refused? Why, of course it would. He wishes me to go, and as a universal matter of gratitude, I must."

Sarah wept, but said no more, when he kissed her and went to look after his shirts, while she sought the widow; and having ascertained that Juliana's maid, a pretty little delicate *blonde*, was going with them, she obtained leave of absence for two or three hours, and went to consult Corney's aunt.

Having arrived at Craske's house in a state of intense perspiration, she was received with the utmost kindness by the good old lady, who perceiving in an instant that something had happened, enquired most anxiously, "what on airth" it was.

"He's going," replied Sarah, greatly excited—"he's going to leave us: he's going to go into foreign parts, where all the women run about naked! Would you believe it?"

"Who, dear? Who's a goin'? who do yow mean?"

"Cornelius."

"*He* a goin' to foreign[parts]?"

"He's off to-morrow morning with Mr. Charles."

"To-morrow mornin'?"

"Yes! and he'll be drowned, I *know* he will! We never shall see him again."

"A goin' to foreign parts," said aunt Ann, with a peculiar expression of incredulity, "to-morrow mornin'? What Corney?"

"Yes, as true as I'm alive."

"*He* shan't go to foreign parts! He shan't go and get drowned! There ain't no sort of necessity for it now!"

"Don't let him go at all. Pray don't. Set your face against it. *You* can persuade him. He'll be a comfort here; but while he is gone we shall be wretched. Pray don't—pray don't let him go at all."

"He shan't go! I'll see all round about that! He *ain't* a goin' to go and get drowned now? What's the good of bringin' boys up to be drowned?—Here Bill!" she added, calling to one of the men, "where's yer master?"

"Arter the pigs," replied Bill.

"Do yow go and tell him to come here at onest!"

"Very well, marm," said Bill, who moved towards the piggery, at the rate of a quarter of a mile an hour, and very deliberately told his master that he'd "got to go and cut in like life."

Craske, wondering what could have happened, and hoping that the house was not in flames, left his pigs, and on entering the room in which Sarah was sitting, aunt Ann said, "It marn't be! I'll take care it shan't! What d'ye think? Here's Corney a goin' to foreign parts! to a place they call Italy, right at the very other end of the world, where the women go naked, and Bengal tigers run about just like rats."

"What d'ye say? Corney's a goin'?" said Craske.

"Yes, he thinks he's goin' in the morning, but he ain't."

"Corney a goin' to foreign parts! *He* marn't go to foreign parts."

"Don't I say so? He *shan't* go! I'll tie him by the leg first. He'll p'raps get drowned, or a thousand things: what does he know about the sea? he can't swim. P'raps he'll get swallowed up whole by the savages; they're not at all nice. I say he shan't go: I'm 'tarmined he shan't; and so that's all round about that."

"Do persuade him off it, there's a good soul," said Sarah. "I wouldn't have him go for the world."

"Well, but look here," said Craske, who felt quite bewildered. "I don't understand this at all. Yow say Corney's a goin' to foreign parts, and he's going to start to-morrow mornin'; but yow don't mean to say which he's goin' to leave arout comin' to say good bye?"

"But he shan't say good bye," said aunt Ann, "I'm 'tarmined."

"Well, but why does he go? Who's he goin' with? and what's he goin' for? Let's know sutfen about it."

"Mr. Charles is going," said Sarah, "and Mr. Lejeune, and Miss Lejeune, and Mrs. Wardle: they're all going together, and want Cornelius to go with them."

"Oh that's it! He's goin' with them; that alters the case! Let him go by all means."

"What!" cried aunt Ann, "to be drowned!"

"Oh! he'll not be drowned."

"Brother, brother, how yow talk! How can yow tell what may happen? How can any mortal upon airth tell that he won't come back a dead corpse? He shan't go, I tell yow he shan't go; and if I say he shan't go, he shan't. Bill!" she added, calling to that active individual, "mount one of the horses, and gallop to the Hall, and tell Cornelius to come here at onest."

Bill certainly obeyed her as far as mounting one of the horses went, but the horse he mounted had evidently not been taught to gallop in his early days, and was rather too old then to learn. Bill, however, caused him to compromise the matter, for a ground-ash well applied, convinced him that he had better trot; which he did, and nearly jolted the life out of Bill.

"Sartney," said Craske, when this courier had been despatched, "one o' the others would do just as well. A travellin' sarvant is but a travellin' sarvant, and nothin' else all the world over, and as Corney's had this 'here sum o' money left him, he don't ought to go arount making his will."

"That's what I look at," cried aunt Ann promptly. "He ain't like a man which has nothin' to lose. If anythin' was to occur to him now—if he was to be drowned, or anythin' o' that, I should never forgive myself—never. But he shan't go. What does he want to go for? What does he know about these foreign parts? and what does he want to pick up foreign ways for? How many miles does he say it is, dear?"

"He don't know exact," replied Sarah, "but he says he knows it's a variety of thousands."

"Look at that! How can we ever expect to see him again? Look at the shipwrecks we see in the papers."

"That's what I look at," said Sarah, "and that's what I told him, and 'specially them where they eat each other up."

"Yow're quite right, my dear," said aunt Ann, "very right. See what a horrible thing it would be, if he was to eat the lady's-maid, or the lady's maid was to eat him. Yow say they're a goin' together. Look at that! Why it's right on shockin' to think about, and 'specially when there's no call at all for him to go."

"Sartney," said Craske; "there's no call for him to go."

"Then don't let him go," cried Sarah; "pray don't. Persuade him off it—do, there's a good soul—do! See what a comfort he'd be to us all!"

"Well, we shall see what he says when he comes. Sartney it ain't like as though he must go, and sussen *might* happen!"

"Of course," said aunt Ann, "and would no doubt, and then we should never forgive ourselves. I thought I should hear o' sussen awful, by my dream last night. I were sartin' of it, and here it is, and yet some 'll say there ain't nothen in dreams. Do yow come up stairs along o' me, my dear, and when he comes, *we'll* soon see how it's to be."

Sarah accordingly went with her friend, who freely developed her

plan of attack, and having sufficiently dwelt upon shipwrecks in general, and cannibalism in particular, they rejoined Craske, who was smoking his pipe, just as Corney came into the yard.

"Here he is!" cried Sarah, who was on the look out.

"Now then," said Craske, "don't let's all speak together. Which on us is to speak fust?"

"Do yow," replied Aunt Ann; "do yow. Do yow see what yow can do with him fust, and then I can foller up arter."

"What! Sally, my love!" cried Corney, as he entered: "you here!"

"Yes, Cornelius," replied Sarah, faintly; "I came to bring the dreadful news."

"The *dreadful* news?"

"Come yow here, Corney, bor," said Craske; "come here and sit afore me. So," he continued, when Corney had obeyed, "yow're a goin' to foreign parts, I hear."

"Yes," replied Corney, "we're off in the morning."

"An' was yow a goin' about comin' so much as to say good bye?"

"Why, I have come to say good bye to you, haven't I?"

"Yes, when yow was sent for."

"Sent for! nobody came for me."

"What, haven't yow seed our Bill?"

"Not a bit of him; unless that was him on an old cart-horse, which he paid about the head and ears, I thought, pretty tidy."

"But yow know Bill?"

"Yes; but if that was him, he was a long way off me. I thought it was somebody going for a doctor."

"Well," said Craske, "that's nayther here nor there. Question is, what do yow want, bor, to go to foreign parts for?"

"That's what I want to know," exclaimed aunt Ann, who thought this process of questioning slow. "What do *yow* want to go for when there's no call for it?—yow above all other men upon airth! 'Taint as if yow was obleedged to go! 'Taint as if yow'd got no flesh to care for yer! 'Taint as if goin' to foreign parts was your bread! I say that yow've got no right to go. I say that yow don't ought to think about goin'. What business have *yow* for to go to sea, and get shipwrecked, and drowned, and cast away, and Heaven in his mercy knows what! I say it's a shame and a sin to think about it. What do yow know about the sea? What can yow know about it? I was on it onest, and that was at Yarmouth nigh six and fifty year ago, and I'm sure that it turned me so sick and so ill that die I thought I must. I tell yow, yow're not at all fit to go. Yow've never bin brought up to it; yow know nothin' about it, and don't want to know. What do yow want to know for? What do yow want to run headlong into danger for, as if yow was nobody wi' nothin' to lose? What do yow want to cross the sea for, which the waves rolls mountains high, foamin' like soap-suds and washin' the clouds and then comin' down with a roar! Why yow'd go into fits, I *know* yow would! Yow'd never come home here alive, and as sich yow needn't think about goin' at all—"

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"Well but listen," said Corney.

"Don't tell me," continued his aunt, who had wound herself up like the works of an alarm bell, and *couldn't* stop till the weight of her eloquence had run down. "I tell yow, yow don't ought to think about goin'; and, moreover than that, yow *needn't* think about goin', for go yow shan't! I'll lose my life first! What on airth do yow want to go *for*?"

"I'll tell you," said Corney.

"A pooty thing indeed!" pursued his aunt, who had not done by any means; "a pooty thing indeed, here to go all this number o' thousands o' miles, and for what?"

"To see life."

"To see life! Do yow mean the life that's in them impudent hussies—they bold and unnatural women yow talked about to Sarah this mornin'? Is that the sort o' life yow want to see? Why I'm ashamed o' yow—right on ashamed! Sich sights ain't fit for Christians! Keep yow at home, bor, and lead a stiddy life, and don't yow run about arter such sights as them!"

"Will you let me get a word or two in edgeways?" said Corney, as his aunt stopped to wind herself up again. "Will you hear me just speak? because if you will I'll tell you all exactly what's o'clock."

"That'll do," said Craske; "it's *yowre* turn now: go on."

"Well! Mr. Charles rings for me, and says, 'Cornelius, you know that I'm going abroad, will you go with me?' What could I say? Could I say, No, I won't? Would that have been gratitude after all Sir John has done for me? No! Knowing that he wished me to go,—for if he hadn't he'd have asked one of the others,—I said, 'Yes; I'll go, sir,' and go I must; and as for savages and shipwrecks, and that sort of thing, I must stand my chance of course with the rest."

"But what necessity is there," demanded aunt Ann, "for yowre standin' any such chance? There's no call for it—none—not the lessest in the world!"

"I must say," added Craske, "that if yow do go, yow don't ought to go arout makin' yar will."

"Make my will!" cried Corney; "me make my will?—what, at my time o' life? Why if I was to make my will I should think I was going to die right off."

"Yow may make yowre will if yow like," said aunt Ann, who now assumed an air of authority. "But look yow here!—now on this I'm 'tarmined—I don't wish to do it, not at all—I shall be very sorry to have to do it: it'll hurt my feelin's much to do it—but just yow look here—make yowre will if yow like, but *if* yow go I'll alter mine! and now yow know my 'tarmination."

"But how can I get off it?" cried Corney.

"What!" replied his aunt, "will yow make me believe that one o the others won't do as well as yow?"

"Why didn't Mr. Charles ask one of the others?"

"I don't care a mite about what yow say; yow've no call to go, and if yow *do* go my 'tarmination's fixed."

"Well, but I've packed all my things—handkerchiefs, shirts and stockings, and all!"

"Handkerchers, shirts, and stockings! Who's to mend 'em? Who's to look arter yow while yow're gone?"

"Why, the lady's maid; *she'll* look after me!"

Sarah burst into tears.

"The lady's maid!" cried his aunt, contemptuously; "what, do yow think ladies' maids mend men's stockings?"

"Why shouldn't they; where's the law on earth to prevent 'em? Sally, my girl—come," he added, "don't take on so. It's nothin'! I shall soon come back again if I go."

"But don't go, Cornelius," said Sarah, "pray don't. For my sake don't; for the sake of your father, for the sake of your dear aunt and all—don't go. Consider what our feelings will be while you're gone. We shall think that a thousand things have happened. It isn't, you know, as your dear aunt says—it isn't as if you were forced to go, in order to keep your situation, because it don't matter to you, Cornelius, whether you keep it or not; and I'm sure if you look at the risks you'll run, you'll see that it's never worth while to go at all. Besides, you hear what your dear aunt says; and I'm quite sure she'll be just as good as her word—"

"That I will," interposed aunt Ann, firmly.

"Look, then, Cornelius, at what you'll get by going, and then look at what you will lose. Then again, dear, you don't want to see more life—you've seen enough of that already. You're not like an ignorant man which wants his faculties polished up! You know more—much more, Cornelius—than many a man would pick up in fifty years; and as for your going to learn how to talk, why who can talk more beautiful than you? Why if you were to see the scenes you describe, you couldn't describe them more nicely! What, then, *can* you want to go for? Don't go—pray don't—there's a love! You know how dear you are to us all; and if anything *was* to happen to you, it would be the death of us—I know it would."

"Well; but Sally, my love," said Corney, "how am I to get off of it?"

"Easily, dear," replied Sarah. "All you have to do is to see Mr. Charles, and tell him your friends are afraid of your going—or what'll be better, say right down at once that you're going to marry and take a small farm, and would feel much obliged to him if he'd excuse you."

"That'll be the very thing," said aunt Ann—"the very thing! And he can't feel offended at that!"

"Well," said Corney, "I don't like to do it, but if I must do it I must; and if I do, the sooner I do it the better."

"Yes, dear," said Sarah, "it had better be done at once, and then, you know, whoever goes will have time to prepare. Go now, dear, and tell him, and then come back again."

"Well, but I can't walk all *that* distance back'ards and for'ards."

"*Will* yow go and do it?" demanded aunt Ann."

"Well, I s'pose I *must*," replied Corney. "I don't *like* to go and call off, but as you've all set your faces wholly against it, it's no use for me to hold out."

"Very well," said aunt Ann; "I'll soon find yow a horse which'll take yow there and back, bor, in no time.—Dick!" she cried, having opened the door—"put the saddle on Smiler, and don't be long about it. Ain't that air Bill back yet?"

"No, marm," replied Dick.

"Why what an eternal time he's bin. Now move as if yow *meant* to do't! Whatever on airth has become o' that Bill?"

"He's waiting, perhaps," suggested Corney.

"But what's the good of his waiting there? We've got, I believe,—take one wi' the other—the stupidest men upon nature's airth. But that's not the pint: the pint is for yow to do this, bor, without giving any offence. Yow can say, if yow like, that it's all along o' me: that I once went to sea in a fishing-boat at Yarmouth nigh six-and-fifty year ago, and felt as if I *didn't* care whether I lived or died! Yow can bring me in in any way, bor, yow like; but I think that if yow say what Sarah tells yow to say, that yow're about to get married, and to take a small farm, it'll show him at onest that yow've no right to go, and that if yow went with him, it 'ud be a loss o' time. There, now go," she added, as the horse was brought out, "and if yow make haste back, bor, I'll ha' suffen nice for yowre tea."

"Now, Corney, bor," said Craske, "yow marn't offend Mr. Charles: be sure yow don't offend him: yow can do it very well arou't that. Mind, whatever yow do, don't offend him."

"I won't, if I can help it," said Corney sharply, and left them with an air which convinced them all that he was not highly pleased with their proceedings.

"Now," said he, as he rode along thoughtfully, "this is what I call tyranny, this is!—real and universal tyranny! But it's allus the case with these old swells which has got any property to leave. If you offend 'em, good bye!—it's all up!—away goes the property from you like life! You musn't do what you like yourself. You must do what *they* like—if not, it's a case. Now, you know, this is slavery in every point of the compass, and yet what are you to do? It's true—I've got property o' my own, but put hers to it, and see how it'll be swelled! Them houses are worth three or four hundred pounds! Look at that!—look at it added to five! Then, again, if I offend one I may offend the other, and the governor's got two or three hundred, of course, although it's locked up in the farm. It ain't perhaps likely he'd leave it away from me—but, then, who knows? Who can tell what fancy he may take into his head? Look at Sir John leaving the estate clean away from George!—and although that's not to be wondered at by me, knowing what he is and what games he's been up to for years—how can I tell that he won't leave what he has away from me? No, it won't do: I must keep in with them both, although I must say I don't a mite like this business of calling off going."

Having reached the Hall, and ascertained that Charles was in the library, he went to him, and said somewhat tremulously, "Can I speak to you, if you please, sir?"

"Certainly, Cornelius," replied Charles. "What is it?"

"I hope, sir," said Corney, who could scarcely get his words out, so highly important did he deem his communication—"I hope, sir, that what I am going to say won't be thought, sir, to be out of no disrespect, or any want, sir, of anything like gratitude; but you know, sir, what old people are, sir, and 'specially old women, which it's difficult, you know, sir, to do anything with, and which must have their own way, you know, sir; and as such I'm very sorry for it, and I hope you won't think it any want of respect."

"Well, go on, Cornelius—go on," said Charles, who felt that Corney had still the power within him to make himself a little more intelligible.

"I hope, sir, you'll excuse me," pursued Corney, much embarrassed; "I should like it much, but she's afraid o' the sea."

"Who's afraid of the sea, Cornelius? Whom are you talking about?"

"My aunt, sir. She's getting very old, sir. I just went to bid her good bye, and she wouldn't have me leave to go abroad for the world."

"Oh!" said Charles. "I see! Your aunt does not approve of your going abroad."

"She's afraid, sir."

"Very good: then tell James I want him."

"I hope you don't think it any disrespect to you, sir."

"Not at all, Cornelius: oh! not at all."

"Besides, sir, I think of marrying, and taking a small farm."

"Well, Cornelius, well. I don't see that you can do better. Do I know the person to whom you are about to be married?"

"Sarah, sir—our Sarah."

"Well! She appears to be a very steady person."

"She is, sir," said Corney, "and a very good sort."

"No doubt of it, Cornelius: no doubt. And as regards a farm, if you wish to continue in this part of the country, speak to my brother about it: *he'll* find you some land: he thinks of breaking up some portion of the park. Speak to him about it; and be assured of this, that we shall at all times be glad to render you any assistance."

"I return you many thanks, sir," said Corney. "I *should* like to go with you, sir, but I mustn't."

"Say no more about that, Cornelius. Send James here."

Corney respectfully bowed, and withdrew; and when he had ascertained that James really was going, his indignation at that which he termed his aunt's "universal tyranny" increased.

"But never mind," said he to himself, "I'll be even with her. I'll put her in a stew of suspense for it now. I'll write her a note, which no flesh shall understand, and which'll serve her out by keeping her awake all night."

He then, inspiring the spirit of revenge, wrote a note, which ran precisely as follows:—

"dearauntiwritethesefewlinestoinformyouthatinobediencetoyourwishesihavedeclinedtogoabroadandthata Jamesisgoingandwantstogetthisshirtsandthingsreadyimustkeepathomeandwaitattableandthereforeicantsee youagain tonightsonomoreatpresentfromyouraffectionatenephewcorneliuscraske."

"There," said he, having completed the note, "I think this'll be about a clencher. She'll be all the blessed night running over the links of *this* chain, and that'll be what's called retributive justice. She'll think it some Hottentot language or other, and fancy, of course, that I'm going to start, and all I've got to do to get out of it is to say that I was in such a hurry I couldn't stop for stops."

He directed and sealed it, and took it with him into the stable-yard, and found one of the boys, to whom he said, "Simon, if you take this note to my aunt, I stand a shilling; but if you come back without an answer, mind, I stand nothing."

"I won't come back about an answer," said the boy, who held a shilling to be a little fortune; "I'll take care and recollect that."

"Very well," said Corney, "mind you do. Don't on any account leave the place without one."

"All right," returned the boy, who put the note into his cap, and immediately started across the park.

He was not long going, being anxious to see the colour of the shilling; and on his arrival at Craske's house, he sent the note in, as a matter of course, and told the girl that he was to wait for an answer.

Well! Aunt Ann opened the note, and ran her eyes along the chain of letters until her sight was lost among the links. She got her spectacles. Well! they magnified, certainly, but they only magnified the confusion.

"What on airth is the matter o' my eyes?" she exclaimed. "I must be a losin' my *sight*! I fear to run all the letters one into the other! Dear me, I hope my eyes ain't a goin' so fast! Here, brother, just read this note, will yow?"

"Sartney, Ann," said Craske, putting on his spectacles. "It's from Corney, I s'pose?"

"Yes, it's from him; but I fear so confused in my eyes, I can't read it."

"Oh, we'll make it out, I dare say, Ann, atwixt us. Eh?—What?" he added fitfully, as he looked at the note with an expression of curiosity the most intense—"What?—what's this? Why it's the language o' where he was goin'?—Derranti writhe se fewl ines toin formyouth atino bediencetoy—It's French or Greek, or suffen o' that; and as he knows we're not high larnt, he didn't ought to have sent it. Look here, my dear," he added, addressing Sarah, who of course felt most anxious to know what Corney had written, "see if yow can make anything out of it: I can't!"

"It's 'some foreign language," said Sarah, as she glanced at it. "Perhaps it's Italian, where he was going."

"And where he *is* goin'," said aunt Ann; "mark that!"

"I hope not," replied Sarah—"dear me! I hope not; but I'm sure I'm not scholar enough to know what particular language it is."

"Who brought it?" enquired Craske.

"One of the boys," replied aunt Ann.

"Have him in then. Let's see if *he* knows anything about it."

Aunt Ann called the lad in at once, when Craske said to him, "Did yow bring this here note, bor?"

"Yes," replied the boy.

"Who from?"

"From Cornelius, which told me to wait for an answer."

"We can't send an answer, bor: we can't brain it."

"Must have an answer, please," said the boy, who began to think his shilling belonged to the Apocrypha. "Marn't leave arount. It's petickler. He's off in the mornin'; he's off to foreign parts."

"Did *he* tell yow so?"

"No, *he* didn't tell me, but coachman did; and so, in course, I *know* he's agoin'."

"There," said aunt Ann,—“there, just what I said! Didn't I tell yow how it 'ud be? Well!—let him go—let him go, and he shall know it. He shall *never* have a shillin' o' mine while he lives.”

"Do yow know Mr. Conks?" enquired Craske, addressing the boy, who stood in a state of lively apprehension that he never should behold that particular shilling.

"Mr. Conks?" replied the boy; "what Mr. Conks the schoolmaster?—that Mr. Conks?"

"Yes," replied Craske, "just down here in the village."

"Oh yes!" said the boy, "I went to school there, and so I've got plenty of reason to know him."

"Very good," returned Craske; "then if yow'll just go there, and tell him that I shall be very much obleeged if he'll just step up here for about half a minit, I'll gi yow a horn o' ale, because arount him we can't send an answer back."

Well. The boy had no objection to a horn of ale. It would have suited his palate then exactly: but he didn't care so much about the horn of ale as he did for the shilling, the prospect of which had faded considerably since his arrival; and as it then appeared clear to him that Mr. Conks was really the only man going by whom this shilling could be secured to him, he started, and having found that gentleman, begged of him, as earnestly as if it had been a matter of life or death, to accompany him to the residence of Mr. Craske immediately, in order, as he said, "to settle a question which none but the high larnt could top."

Accordingly, Mr. Conks, who highly appreciated the homage paid to his learning, accompanied the boy, in the full expectation of earning at least a mug of ale, of which beverage of was remarkably fond.

"Muster Conks," said Craske, addressing that gentleman as he

entered, "we've got a note here writ in some foreign tongue that nayther of *us* can brain at all; and as we know that yow're wonderful high larnt in languages, we've sent for yow to be kind enough to tarn it into sense."

Mr. Conks—who had acquired a reputation for learning by a pompous delivery of high-sounding words which legitimately belonged to no language at all—received the note with feelings of apprehension, being conscious that if it were written in anything but English, he should be able to make nothing whatever of it.

"Ah!" said he, as he knit his brows and glanced at the note hurriedly, resolved on pronouncing it to be one chaotic mass of unintelligible nonsense; "Oh!—Let me take a pinch of snuff."

He did so, and looked at the note again; and having happily discovered the meaning of it all, he slightly smiled, and then again looked learned indeed.

"As Cornelius thinks of going to Italy, we think it's Italian, sir," observed Sarah.

"Italian, my dear!" said Mr. Conks pompously—feeling that he might then with perfect safety show off—"that to a man of philosophical sentiments makes no earthly odds. Whether it be Italian or Turkish, or Greek or Chinese, or Constantinopolitanean, or any other tongue that ever entered the mouth of humanity since the creation within the comprehensive scope of the terrestrialized globe, it don't get over *me*."

"P'raps a mug of ale may assist you," said Craske.

"It may," replied Mr. Conks gravely—"It may: but rest inextinguishably assured that I don't leave this without making it fairly and concisely out, let it be whatever language it may."

"Oh, he's wonderful clever!" whispered aunt Ann to Sarah. "Nothen's too high larnt for *him*."

"Languages," pursued Mr. Conks, "are so dissimulaneous in their peculiarly characteristic collateralization of tenses, that it requires the study of the philosopher's stone to be able to understand them all. Look at the Welsh language!—look at the Spanish!—look at the Irish!—look at the Dutch!—look at Babel, which we read of in Genesis!—look at the condensed confusion of tongues there! A man must think to get over them all. He must have a mental exumification of the mind."

"It's wonderful how it's done at all," said aunt Ann; "it raily is right on wonderful. I shouldn't be able to speak the words, let alone understandin' 'em."

"No, I suppose not: listen, for instance: what would you do with this—krackkrokivisky krakrivekikekrokra kikkikrukikkikrykag kra-
krekre?"

"Oh! I couldn't bring my tongue to pronounce it at all."

"And yet you see it is to be done. You see it comes like nature from me. But to business," added Mr. Conks, who looked at the note very gravely again. "Exactly! I see! Very good indeed! Well! you want this translated?"

"We only want to brain it," said Craske, "that's all!—we only merely want to know what it's all about."

"Very good. Then you *shall* know what it's all about."

"*Can* you really do it, sir?" enquired Sarah anxiously.

"Do it?" exclaimed Mr. Conks. "Why, what did I tell you before? Bring it me in an antediluvian language, or any other language upon earth, and I'd do it. Now listen," he added; "attend to every word, and you shall have every word of it interpreted. Now then, this is what he says:—'Dear Aunt—I write these few lines to inform you that, in obedience to your wishes, I have declined to go abroad; and that as James is going, and wants to get his shirts and things ready, I must keep at home and wait at table, and therefore I can't see you again to-night. So no more at present from your affectionate nephew, Cornelius Craske.'—*There* you have it word for word."

"Oh! thank you, sir—thank you!" said Sarah, delighted.

"Capital!" cried Craske, with a feeling of admiration. "That's capital—well done, indeed! I knowed yow was the man—I knowed yow was!"

"Oh! to *me*," said Mr. Conks, "it comes as natural as life."

"Yow're sartin sure," observed aunt Ann, "that he says he's *not* goin' abroad?"

"Quite. Here it is. He says that in obedience to your wishes, he has declined, and that James—whoever James may be—is going instead."

"Well, I feel very much obleeged to yow; but yow *shall* stop and take a cup o' tea arter this—that yow shall!—Here, bor," she added addressing the lad, who was still in attendance of course, "here's a penny, and tell Cornelius 'Very well.'"

"Is that all I'm to say, marm?" enquired the boy, who really had a very strong suspicion that 'Very well' would not by Corney be considered *worth* a shilling. "He said I warn't by no manner o' means whatsumdever to come back aroud an answer."

"This nephew of yours is a rogue!" said Mr. Conks.

"What, Cornelius?" enquired Sarah indignantly.

"Yes! And if you'll tell the boy to leave the room for a moment, I'll prove it.—Now look here," he continued, when the boy had retired; "he has written to you in this state of confusiation, conceiving that you wouldn't understand it."

"If so," said Craske, "he was just about right, 'cause we couldn't."

"Very good," pursued Mr. Conks, who knew, of course, that if *he* did not explain it all, Corney would. "He wrote it with that idea, and therefore I say that he's a young rogue. He knew, or at all events he fancied, that it would appear to you all to be a species of compound jumblication."

"And so it did," said Craske. "But however he become so high larnt, I can't think! Wherever he picked it all up, I can't brain! Whoever on airth larnt him foreign languages, is a thing which is wholly a mystery to me!"

"I'll undertake to teach you this language in five minutes—nay, in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye!"

"Ah! I'm too old to larn languages; and if I wasn't, they'd be o' no use to me."

"But I'll teach you all in an instant!"

"Dear me!" said Sarah, "how clever you must be! I'd no notion that languages could be taught thus quick. I should, however, dearly like to know that language, especially as Cornelius knows it; and if you could teach me in so short a time, you don't know how thankful I should feel."

"Oh! I'll teach you all. This is not a foreign language—although if it was it wouldn't of course make the slightest difference to me. But it isn't; and therefore I'll teach you all at once. Dont you see," he continued, as they looked at the note earnestly, while he with his pencil divided the words, "Don't you see it's all English, with the letters put together without either spacing or pointing? Look here, 'Dear Aunt—I—write'—and so on; don't you see?"

"Why, what eternal fools we must be not to brain that afore!" cried aunt Ann.

"Soul and bones!" exclaimed Craske, laughing heartily. "There's a job!—*there's* a job! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Isn't he a young rogue *now*?" cried Mr. Conks. "Isn't he a young rogue *now*? I'll tell you what I'd do with that young gentleman," he added, addressing aunt Ann more particularly: "I'd send a written answer by the boy, and jumble all the letters together as he has done, and thus at once prove to him that you understand it."

"I'll do it!" returned Aunt Ann. "A brave thought!"

"Yes; that'll be capital, won't it?" said Craske. "That will be what I call capital."

"Now then," said aunt Ann, who got the pen and ink—"now then, dear, what shall us say? Shall us say we're glad to hear which he ain't opposed our wishes, and which, if he had, he wouldn't ha' bin half so much thought on?"

"That'll do beautiful, indeed!" replied Sarah. "You can't say anything better than that. But jumble all the letters together in confusion; and in order to puzzle him the more, don't spell the words right by any means."

Aunt Ann laughed, and commenced her task; and having finished it, gave the note to the boy, who felt, under the circumstances, thankful.

They then had tea: and *such* a tea! Aunt Ann was so happy—so full of joy—that she felt that she *couldn't* load the table too much. She had toast and broiled ham, and a knuckle of pork, and cheese and eggs and onions, and honey and sausage rolls, and potted hare and ale, and black puddings and pickles! Mr. Conks, having partaken of nearly the whole of these luxuries, pronounced it in a fit of enthusiasm to be a tea fit for the gods!

He then had a social pipe with Craske; and aunt Ann and Sarah, having cleared away, rejoined them, when, as a natural matter of grati-

tude, he proceeded to inspire them with a wonderfully high appreciation of his learning; and as he was essentially a man of imagination, he let it loose, and related a variety of his own personal adventures—in which he really never was and never could have been engaged; and thus at once amazed and amused them, until it was found to be high time for Sarah to leave.

CHAPTER XXIV.

D'ALMAINE AT THE HALL.

A FEW hours after the departure of Charles, with Lejeune, Juliana, and the Widow, D'Almaine made his appearance at the Hall. Having received the intelligence of Sir John's death from George—to whom he conceived the estate then belonged—he had determined on this expedition, not only in order to obtain cash for the I O U, but with the view of getting as much more as he could before George heard of the public discovery of those villanies in which he had been so long engaged.

His circumstances at that time, in consequence of this discovery, were desperate. He had gained thousands—aye, tens of thousands—by his nefarious transactions with the “Artful;” but as he had spent the money as fast as he got it, he found himself without a five pound note, and without a friend willing to lend him one. He was repudiated even by the “Artful” himself, in consequence of his having revealed the secret of their connection, being resolved, as he said, not to suffer alone.

This expedition was therefore regarded by him as a *dernier ressort*, and as on his arrival he was received by George with every possible manifestation of pleasure, he felt that his star was again in the ascendant, and congratulated himself on having made a happy hit.

“I flattered myself,” said he, when George had greeted him most cordially—“I flattered myself that I should not be a very unwelcome visitor, although I had before my eyes the necessity for making an apology for running down without an invitation.”

“Don't say a word about that,” returned George. “I am happy to see you, and I hope that during your stay you'll make yourself quite at home.”

“I will, old fellow, because I know it will please you. But, I say, what a stunning estate you have here!”

“Well, it may be said to be a fine estate,” said George.

“I'd no conception of it's being so extensive!”

“The extent of it, old fellow, you'll know more about by and by. But come with me and take possession of your rooms, and when we have had lunch, we'll ride round it.”

D'Almaine was accordingly installed in the apartments which had been previously appropriated to Mr. Lejeune, and having contemplated

the indications of substantial wealth around him, he made up his mind at once to go to work in earnest.

"I must have some of this wealth," thought he. "I feel that I have a portion of it now within my grasp; and if I can by any means get a purse again together, I'll hold it. I'll not be the wretched fool I have been. He's fond of play. Well: I can work him—cautiously, yet surely. He has this fine estate: he is surrounded by all the luxuries of life, while I have the prospect of utter destitution before me. It must be done, and I feel that it may be done with ease; but if it *be* done, it must be done quickly. If that infernal Ben, who is watching all my movements, should discover that I am down here, he'll follow me and spoil all by claiming his share of the I O U. I was a fool for setting him against me. I was a fool for revealing that secret. It did me no good, but much harm—a *fool!* I must not, however, dwell upon that which is passed: I must look to the future alone; and if I am not much mistaken, I shall be able to get enough here to fall back upon for life. Let me have once more sufficient to bring me in three or four pounds a week, and I'll stick to it, and live upon it, and never touch a shilling of the principal. I have had three fortunes and squandered them foolishly away; but let me have one more chance, and I'll secure it: nothing on earth shall induce me to risk that."

Having had lunch, George took him into the stable-yard, and ordered one of the grooms to bring out Grey Melton, the finest and most valuable horse in the stud, standing within half-an-inch of seventeen hands high, thorough-bred, and possessing the most perfect symmetry, and consequent activity, courage, and strength.

"That is your horse," said George, "during your stay; and this is your groom," he added, turning to one of the men.—"Sam, pay every attention to Mr. D'Almaine. Put the saddle on."

Well! D'Almaine thought that this would *do*; and having mounted, he rode with George round the estate, and of course admired all that he saw.

"I think," said he, as they rode along, "that I should like a quiet country life now. Every thing in town so soon palls upon a man; but here you feel invigorated, enlivened, and prepared to enjoy all the luxuries of life with greater zest."

"Air and exercise," said George, "tend to invigorate, certainly; but a man of your stamp must have variety as well. It may be all very pleasant to be here for a few days, but if you were to live in a place like this year after year, you would almost fancy yourself buried alive."

"I think not," rejoined D'Almaine; "I think not. With an income sufficient to enable me to live in a state of independence, I should not care so much about magnificence. I feel that a tranquil country life would be as pleasurable to me as that perpetual round of excitement to which I have been so long inured."

"Never," said George; "never. Here you would be out of your element. Nothing but excitement would suit you, I know."

"I think that it would."

"Then why don't you try it? You have the means of doing so at your command. Four or five hundred a year in the country will go as far as a thousand will in town. Settle yourself down in the country and try it. Make up your mind now to try it for a year. I'll bet a hundred you'd be sick of it in less than a month."

"That'll do," thought D'Almaine, ; "still sporting, I find."

"What would you say," continued George, "to this ride every morning—to see the same hedges, and trees, and fields—to watch the growth of the barley, the wheat, and the oats, and then to return and dine alone and shut yourself up for the night."

"Aye! but I shouldn't think of doing it so. I'd either go out to dine with some one, or some one should come and dine with me."

"Well; and if you did, what would the society of those whom we in general meet with in the country be to you? What can they talk about?—what *do* they talk about? Nothing but horses, and dogs, and religion. You are fond of dogs, I know. But what can you do with them. Keep them chained up. You dare not try them! A man who fights dogs in the country is considered a heathen. The only thing of importance you can do in the dog line is to keep a pack of hounds, and that alone will cost you a thousand a-year."

"A thousand a-year!" cried D'Almaine.

"Yes, at least. There is in this county a friend of mine who kept a pack fifteen years, and they cost him on the average *two* thousand a year."

"Well; but didn't the persons who joined in the sport subscribe?"

"I'll tell you. Having kept the hounds nearly twelve years at his own expense, he intimated to those whom he met in the field, and whom he treated with princely hospitality, that if they felt disposed to subscribe they might do so, and place the amount of their subscription to his account in one of the banks; and how much do you think they subscribed? Men living in affluence!—fifty of them—who met the hounds three times a-week throughout the season—how much do you *think* they subscribed?"

"Fifty of them—well, say ten pounds each. Perhaps five hundred a-year!"

"Thirty five pounds, and no more! Seven of them paid five pounds each into the bank, and the rest—*notwithstanding* they continued to hunt—altogether forgot it. Why they are the meanest set alive! Provide them with sport, and they'll come to enjoy it, and eat your dinners afterwards, and drink all the wine you like to give them, and call you a jolly good fellow; but expect them to bear any portion of the expense, and you become at once a miserable humbug! That would suit you, wouldn't it?"

"Not exactly."

"No. I should say not; and yet you must associate with them—if, indeed, you have any associates at all—although you know that their aim is to sponge upon you, and privately laugh at your folly."

"There is too much of that in every county, no doubt; still I think that with a few congenial spirits, a country life must be delightful."

"But where are you to get your congenial spirits? Where are you to find them?"

"There are two here, at all events!" said D'Almaine, slapping George on the back heartily. "Three or four like you would be quite enough for me."

George was highly pleased with this: it suited him exactly; and when they had been completely round the estate, they returned to the Hall and dined.

"Croly," said D'Almaine immediately after dinner, "I pledge you in a bumper. I congratulate you on having succeeded to so fine an estate. May you live long, old fellow, to enjoy it!"

"The estate is not mine, D'Almaine," returned George.

"Not yours?—not *yours*? To whom on earth, then, does it belong?"

"My brother Charles," replied George. "It was left to him."

"What!" cried D'Almaine, with an expression of amazement. "Why he is the younger son, is he not?"

"Yes; but the estate has, notwithstanding, been left to him."

"Why you astonish me! But come, come, old fellow: this won't do, you know."

"Oh, it's fact!—I am but the Steward."

"Well, but jesting apart: come, you know I can't take this in. Are you not in reality the owner of this estate?"

"Don't I *tell* you that it belongs to my brother?"

"You *tell* me so; but I *won't* have it!"

"It's the truth, D'Almaine, upon my honour."

"Upon your honour!"

"Yes!"

"Well, but how?" said D'Almaine, who looked perfectly bewildered—how?—what's the meaning of it?—how can it be so?"

"It's sufficient for me to know that it *is* so."

"Well! as you say that it is so, upon your honour, I am of course bound to believe you; but—the younger son, and all!—it appears so strange!"

"You must see a copy of the will, I find, in order to feel convinced. Had it not been so, D'Almaine, I should have sent up the amount of that I O U at once."

"Well, it certainly would have been acceptable, for to tell you the truth, I have lost so much of late that at present I have hardly a feather to fly with."

"Indeed!" cried George, who began to inspire a feeling of contempt for the man.

"I don't mind telling you," said D'Almaine, "because we know each other so well; but as true as I'm alive, I'm at present hard up, and therefore, if you could manage that little matter for me, you'd set me just now on my legs again."

"I can't do it yet," returned George. "You shall have it as soon as possible, but I can't do it yet."

"Can you manage *half* of it?"

"I cannot at present. I really have no money."

"Well, old fellow, but your credit is good!"

"It may be: but I have not yet proved whether it is here or not. It is, however, certain that I cannot by any means raise the amount at present."

"I'll tell you what I'll do with you, old fellow," said D'Almaine, who was anxious to get a portion of it, at least, before the discovery of his villanies became known to George. "I'll meet you half way—I'll do that! So useful would a little money be to me now, that if you can raise two hundred and fifty, I'll give up your I O U, and cry quits! That will be as much to me now as a thousand would be to me at any other time; and therefore, if you *can* manage it, do."

"Well," said George, "I'll see what I can do to-morrow morning. I shall be able to manage that, I've no doubt."

"There's a good fellow. And now let us drop these infernal money matters: they always were, and always will be to me, disgusting. But when you tell me that this splendid estate is in reality not yours, you amaze me! Still you have, of course, *something*?"

"A paltry two hundred and fifty a-year—that's all."

"Two hundred and fifty a-year! Why I thought that you told me when you were in town that you *knew* the will secured the whole estate to you, with the exception, indeed, of a few legacies!"

"And so it did!—the only will of which *I* had any knowledge!—but this was made subsequently."

"I see! But how does he attempt to *justify* his conduct?"

"He doesn't attempt to justify it at all. But I'll show you a copy of the will," he added, "and then you'll at once know all about it."

He left the room; and during his absence, D'Almaine dwelt deeply upon a scheme which he conceived might, under the circumstances, be easily accomplished.

"But," thought he, "I must secure this two hundred and fifty first, and when I get it, that alone will give me courage to do more. And what have I to fear from him—knowing what I know? Why I could ruin his reputation for ever, and he knows it! This money, however, must first be secured."

"There," said George, on his return with a copy of Sir John's will, "look at that."

D'Almaine opened the document, and proceeded to read it carefully; and when he came to the part which had reference to George, he looked up and said, "Five hundred, old fellow!—*five* hundred a year, instead of two hundred and fifty!"

"Go on," returned George. "You'll see all about it by and by. Wait till you come to the codicil."

Well, D'Almaine continued to read; and having ascertained exactly how the case stood, he said, "Who is this lady, Croly?—this Mrs. Wardle?"

"She was my late father's housekeeper. You saw her with him in London."

"Oh!" said D'Almaine, thoughtfully. "Ah! She is a widow, I think you told me?"

"Yes."

"Has she any private property?—anything besides this five hundred a-year which I perceive Sir John has left her?"

"A trifle," replied George. "She has an interest in some property near here, but the amount she derives from it, is, I believe, inconsiderable."

"She's rather a slappish looking woman, is she not?"

"There's nothing about her particularly slap. She's a good-looking woman enough, and *has* been, I have understood, considered a beauty."

"Ah, she appeared to *me* to be a decent sort of a creature. About what age do you think she is?"

"I should say about fifty."

"She is living in this neighbourhood, I suppose?"

"She left this morning with Charles."

"Is she then going to Italy with him?"

"Oh yes! they are all going together."

"Croly," said D'Almaine earnestly, "you'll laugh at me, doubtless, but I'll tell you a secret: I am resolved on getting married."

"Well," returned George with a smile,—“Well, a man may do worse than even that.”

"The fact is, I am tired of this life of excitement, and have made up my mind to settle down."

"And would you marry the widow?"

"Why should I not?"

"Why, look at her age compared with yours; there's a difference of twenty years, at least."

"I care nothing for that. What sort of disposition has she?"

"Oh! she is a most amiable person, and highly intelligent as well."

"Then I'll tell you what I'll do! I'll look after her. You'll hear from them, in all probability, in a few days; and if you'll let me know where she is, I'll go over."

"You shall know where she is to be found," returned George, "but as for your going on such an expedition, it will be, I know, of no use whatever."

"Why not?" said D'Almaine.

"Because she'll not have you."

"How is it possible for you to know that? I'm not an egotist, nor am I particularly vain, but I *think* that my appearance, to say the least, will not inspire her with disgust."

"Were you the most attractive fellow in Europe, she wouldn't have you."

"Why *not*?" demanded D'Almaine, who felt piqued at this apparent intimation that he really was *not* the most attractive fellow in Europe. "Why not?"

"Because she has made up her mind not to marry again."

"Oh! I shall be able to get over that. I'll soon make her alter her mind on that subject."

"Never," said George. "Never."

"I have no fear of it: not the slightest."

"Nor need you have the slightest hope!"

"Well; but don't you really think that I should be able to work it? Suppose she were at Naples, or Venice, or Rome, and I were to go over and get introduced, do you imagine that her scruples are so deeply imbedded that I couldn't pull them up by the roots?"

"I do. I not only imagine—I *know* that you could not."

"But how is it possible for you to *know*?"

"I'll explain. When her husband—who was our clergyman—was on his death-bed, she promised him that she would never marry again, and she holds that promise to be sacred."

"Well, but don't you think that a little tact would induce her to hold this promise in a less sacred light?"

"A little tact! No! Not all the tact at your command could do it."

"But how do you know?"

"I'll convince you if I can," replied George, who left the room, and having found the widow's letter containing her decision—a copy of which appeared in our fifteenth chapter—he placed it before D'Almaine, and said "There, old fellow, look at that. Understand," he added, "that my father, to whom she was ardently attached, made her an offer just before his death."

"Your father! What, Sir John?"

"Yes, and that is her answer."

D'Almaine read the letter and then shook his head. "You are right," said he, "quite right. It's no go."

"You see she might have had a title as well as a fortune."

"I see. It's all up. Oh, that's a perfect case! But who is this girl whose name is mentioned in the codicil?—this—what's her name? Jane Freeman, who is she?"

"She is the daughter of one of our tenants," replied George.

"A farmer?"

"Yes."

"Has he any tin?"

"Oh he's a very substantial man. He farms about five hundred acres of land, and has plenty of capital to work it."

"Ah. How many children has he?"

"She's his only child."

"His *only* child! Ah. I don't understand it myself, but how much capital is necessary to work a farm of five hundred acres?"

"Well, to work it as he works it, and to keep the stock that he keeps, you'd require—let me see—five eights are forty—you'd require at least four thousand pounds."

"Four thousand pounds. Ah. You know her of course?"

"I should think so."

"Is she a tidy-looking girl?"

"The most beautiful girl in *this* county."

"Oh, I see! Then *you'll* secure her."

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"I will if I can. The fact is I seduced her, and hence that infernal codicil."

"Did you refuse to marry her then?"

"I did; conceiving that the estate would be mine. I tell you this in confidence, of course."

"Of course! I understand. But why don't you marry her now?"

"Well—there is a little difficulty to be surmounted."

"Ah! I don't of course desire to pry into any secrets. You say that you seduced her. Is she *enccinte*?"

"She is," replied George.

"Well, then, of course you'll marry her at once."

"I can say no more than that I will if I can."

"If you *can*, old fellow? Why she can't, under the circumstances, refuse to have *you*?"

"Perhaps she'll not," replied George. "We shall see. Pass the wine."

D'Almaine, who imagined that this would be an excellent chance for him, and who at the same time perceived that there was something beneath the surface which rendered the union of George and Jane doubtful, at once made up his mind to fall desperately in love with her, and, if possible, to carry her off.

"Well," said he, having resolved on not saying another word on this subject, "how do you spend your evenings? Do you play at all?"

"Whom have I to play with?" said George with a smile. "I associate with no one here. I go into the town sometimes and have a rubber; but even there they are so spiritless, that I seldom do even that. If you'd like to have a few throws, I've dice in the house?"

"Well," replied D'Almaine, "we need not play high. We'll have a few throws, if you like!"

The dice were produced, and they played; and as D'Almaine had but two sovereigns to commence with, he proposed to begin low, and they threw for crowns; but when he had succeeded in making the game *safe*, the stakes were increased, they played for pounds, and D'Almaine's purse was filled again.

In the morning, George, mindful of his promise, and pleased with the prospect of saving two hundred and fifty pounds by its performance, went to the bank, where an account had been opened in his name by Charles; and during his absence, D'Almaine, having decided on the pursuit of a course which he imagined could hardly fail to be successful, ordered his horse, ascertained in what direction Freeman lived, and rode over with the view of introducing himself to him.

He passed the house, expecting to catch a glimpse of Jane; but as she was not to be seen, he rode on, and enquired of a boy whom he met if he had seen Mr. Freeman about; and on being informed that Freeman was in an adjoining field, he entered that field and rode up to him at once.

"Good morning," said he.

"Good morning, sir," said Freeman, who knew the horse but not the man.

"Mr. Freeman I believe I have the pleasure of addressing?"

"My name, sir, is Freeman."

"Ah Mr. Freeman! I've often heard my late friend, Sir John, speak of you. A sad loss, Mr. Freeman, a very sad loss."

"It is a sad loss, sir, indeed."

"You don't remember me, I suppose, Mr. Freeman."

"I can't say that I do."

"No, it's some time since I was here before. I'm staying up at the Hall. I ran down to see my friend Charles before he left, but I found that he had started several hours before my arrival."

"Aye, he started yesterday morning."

"Yes, and I arrived a few hours after he left."

"That was unfortunate—very."

"Yes; but these things can't be helped. Disappointments must be borne."

"That's true, sir: they must be. Do you intend to make a long stay in this part of the country?"

"No; I shall not stop long. George and I get on very well, but Charles is my favourite."

"He's a gentleman, sir, is Mr. Charles. I believe him to be as good a man as his father."

"There you have expressed my sentiments precisely. He is a gentleman, every inch of him; I never knew him to be guilty of an act of meanness or dishonour. He possesses a noble heart, and a noble mind too; ingenuous and generous, even to a fault. That Sir John knew, Mr. Freeman. His *will*, I think, sufficiently proves that."

"You are right, sir, quite right," returned Freeman. "The will certainly proves that he was the favourite son."

"Well," said D'Almaine, who thought that he had done enough to this subject for the present, "what sort of crops are we going to have this year?"

"Why, thank God, they look healthy at present: the wheats are particularly strong."

"You are famed for your stock, I understand."

"Well, sir, I can shew you some bullocks which perhaps in this county can't be matched."

"I should really like to see them—if, indeed, I'm not intruding too much on your time."

"Oh dear me, no, not at all! I shall feel great pleasure in shewing them to you."

"Very good. This will do," thought D'Almaine, who, as he rode by Freeman's side, succeeded in making himself particularly agreeable, and when he had highly admired everything he saw, Freeman invited him to take a glass of wine.

No second invitation was needed. They dismounted at once and went into the house, and Freeman, having rung the bell, desired the servant to tell Jane to send him the key of the sideboard.

Jane, who had been watching D'Almaine from her window and wondering who he was—instead of sending the key, was prompted by a very natural feeling of curiosity to take it herself, which she did, and the moment she entered the room D'Almaine appeared absolutely struck with admiration. He gazed at her as if she had enchanted him; and although she retired immediately after she had given the key to her father, the impression which she had apparently created perceptibly remained.

"Is that lovely girl your daughter, Mr. Freeman?" he enquired with an expression of the most intense earnestness.

"Yes, sir," replied Freeman, "that is my Jane."

"I never before beheld such beauty! And she is doubtless as amiable as she is beautiful."

"She's a good girl," said Freeman, "notwithstanding her misfortune."

"Misfortune!" cried D'Almaine, with a look of amazement; "is she unhappily married then to some worthless person?"

"No, sir, no: she is not married. Now, sir," he added, having passed the bottle, "do me the favour to try that."

D'Almaine, who perceived at a glance that the subject could not be with safety pursued then, bowed, and filled his glass and drank, and praised the wine highly, and shortly afterwards rose, and taking Freeman by the hand, expressed himself delighted with his courtesy, and left him.

Having remounted, he gave the man who held his horse a crown, which the poor fellow stared at and then stared at him, and said, "Beg pardon, sir: do yow know wot yow've guv me?"

"All right, my good fellow," replied D'Almaine, who, having caught a glimpse of Jane at one of the windows, raised his hat gracefully and started.

"Well," said he, having passed the gate, "this is an admirable beginning! I have certainly carried two points to perfection! I have made a highly favourable impression upon him, and induced her to believe that she has made a deep impression upon me. Now the next move is an important one. I'll not write to her as I first intended; no. I'll do the ingenuous: an appearance of candour always tells. I'll speak to him—that will be the dodge! Let me make it all right with him, and I shall then have the game in my own hands. If possible, this shall be done to-day. The thing must not be delayed. It is perfectly clear to me that he has not a very exalted opinion of George; that's all in my favour. But I really see nothing which is *not* favourable. The fact of her having been seduced tells for me, and what do I care about her having been seduced? There must be something behind the scenes more than I know of, or he never would have said, 'I'll marry her if I can.' It is hence clear that their marriage does not depend upon *him*. It is certain that she has refused to marry him, and that, viewed with reference to her present situation, proves the existence on her part of some feeling of disgust. What then have I to fear? Why, nothing! She'll marry me if only to be

revenged upon him; and two hundred and fifty a-year, besides the prospect—I may almost say the certainty—of having eventually four or five thousand added, must not, under existing circumstances, be despised. Secure her, and whom need you care for? If it be possible I *will* secure her, and that it *is* possible I feel now convinced. In the course of the day I'll see Freeman again and make it all right with *him*."

On his return to the Hall he found George in the library, who said, "Well, Gusty, have you enjoyed your ride?"

"Very much indeed," replied D'Almaine.

"I have been to raise this money for you. I have had some difficulty about it, but I've done it. Have you the I O U with you?"

"I have," replied D'Almaine; "but I hope that you have not humiliated yourself on my account."

"Here's the money," returned George, "and don't say another word about humiliation. I promised that I'd get it for you if possible, and I have got it."

D'Almaine gave up the I O U, and received two hundred and fifty pounds.

"I have," said he, "a remittance to make; perhaps you'll excuse me for an hour or two."

"Certainly," replied George; "certainly. I hope, old fellow, that while you are here, you'll act precisely as if you were at home. We shall dine together, of course?"

"Oh, I shall be back in an hour or so. I am merely going into the town."

"Very good," replied George; and D'Almaine ordered his horse again; and having reached the town, opened an account at one of the banks, conceiving that the appearance of it might be made useful; and when he had obtained a book, he thoughtfully rode round to Freeman's.

"Is Mr. Freeman within?" he enquired on his arrival.

"Yes, sir," replied the servant, "he is."

"Give him my card, and say that I am the gentleman who had the pleasure of seeing him this morning."

The servant delivered the card to Freeman, and D'Almaine was immediately requested to walk in; and as he entered, Jane rose, and having bowed to him, withdrew, when he took a chair and calmly said to Freeman, "My dear sir, I have to make a thousand apologies for this intrusion; but I feel that when I have explained to you the cause of it, you will pardon me, and ascribe this visit to the purest and most honourable motives. This morning you were kind enough to ask me in to take a glass of wine with you; and I highly appreciated your courtesy; but having entered the house with you, I saw one whose beauty inspired me with admiration—whom with touching simplicity you called a *good* girl, and with whose misfortune I have been since made acquainted. Mr. Freeman, I utterly abhor the heartlessness by which such proceedings are characterized. They cannot be sufficiently reprehended; and as this case in a peculiar manner touched my sym-

pathies, having a high admiration of her beauty, I have paid you this visit, Mr. Freeman, with the view of requesting you to permit me to solicit her hand. You will perceive that I wish to do nothing clandestinely : I like on all occasions to be open and candid. I therefore ask your permission before I attempt to make known my sentiments to her. I require no money at all with her!—not a shilling! The hand and the heart of so beautiful, and, as I believe, so pure-minded a being, are all that I require to render me happy.”

“Well, Mr. D’Almaine,” replied Freeman, who was neither displeased nor amazed to hear that Jane had inspired him with admiration, “you have certainly pursued a very proper course by naming the subject to me first. I must say you have acted very much like a gentleman. I like candour: I like straightforward conduct, sir, as I like my life; but I really can say nothing at all to this, until I have consulted my daughter.”

“Will you do me the favour to consult her on the subject?”

“I will. As a friend of poor Sir John and Mr. Charles, I can’t of course but respect you, and I must say that I like your straightforward conduct much. I *will* consult her on the subject; and if I find her disposed to accept your addresses, why then we shall know how to act.”

“My dear sir,” said D’Almaine, “I hardly know how to thank you; but I beg of you to be assured of this, that should I be fortunate enough to gain her hand, all that a husband should be, I’ll be to her.”

“I hope so, Mr. D’Almaine: I hope so. But how came you to hear of her misfortune?”

“The villain himself told me of it!—I beg pardon,” he added, “I ought not to have made use of that expression, but, between ourselves, I have such a thorough contempt for heartlessness, that I cannot help showing it sometimes. I wish to say nothing against him: if I were to do so, it might appear that I wished to place his conduct in a still more unfavourable light; but you doubtless perceived when I spoke of the will, and before I had seen your beautiful daughter, that Charles was my friend, not George.”

“Yes,” replied Freeman; “I perceived that, of course. Oh, then, *he* told you of it.”

“He did, and I couldn’t help feeling indignant.”

“Did you tell him that you had seen my daughter?”

“No: I wished to have no farther conversation with him on the subject.”

“You are aware, I suppose that he would marry her now, notwithstanding he abandoned her before Sir John’s death.”

“He marry her! Ah, Mr. Freeman, I hope that her happiness will not be sacrificed for ever.”

“That is what she is afraid of, and hence she rejects him.”

“I admire her spirit! She is, moreover, wise! What can she expect, after having been abandoned by him in whose *honour* she reposed the utmost confidence?”

“True, very true: her confidence in him was unbounded, and like

a bad man, he betrayed it. I could show you two notes, sir, from him, which would amaze you."

"Addressed to her?"

"Yes: I have them now in my possession."

"Well: although I know him to be capable of almost anything, I should, I must say, like to see them."

"Then you shall: but, of course, in strict confidence!"

"Of course, my dear sir."

"Then I'll get them. Excuse me for a moment," he added, and left the room, when D'Almaine seized a pen and wrote a cheque for five pounds, which he intended to place in the hands of the servant, but which he took care not to finish until Freeman returned.

"There, sir," said Freeman, as he placed the notes before him, "look at those."

D'Almaine tore off the cheque and put it into his pocket, and then proceeded to read the notes with a well assumed expression of indignation.

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed, having read the notes carefully.

"Good God! why what a strain to write in!"

"There, sir, what do you think of them?"

"My dear sir, don't ask me what I think of them. I cannot trust myself to designate them. I *must* think of them what every other honourable man must think of them; but ask me—pray ask me no more. Why he here attaches all the blame to *her*!"

"That's what I look at more particularly!"

"Oh, George, George! I thought that you were bad enough, certainly; but this surpasses all. And after this he would marry her! Why, if it were possible for her to consent to be thus deeply humiliated, neither you nor I, nor any other man, could have a very high opinion of her intellect. Marry him after this! The proposition is monstrous! No, Mr. Freeman, no idea of that kind can, on her part, be entertained now, I should *think*!"

"And yet, to be candid with you, it sometimes appears that she has a latent affection for the man even now."

"No doubt of it. I cannot have the slightest doubt of that. It is not to be imagined that she had no affection for him. But, sir, the affectionate solicitude of another would very soon wean her from that. I should have no fear whatever on the subject. She would contrast kindness with absolute cruelty, and soon discover which had the ascendancy in her heart. To suppose that she had no affection at all for him, were to suppose that she is not in spirit so pure as I firmly believe her to be, Mr. Freeman; but that her affection for him would soon become extinct, when she found that she had the pure devotion of another, I feel so perfectly well assured that I should not entertain the slightest fear of being able to gain her whole heart."

"Well, Mr. D'Almaine, I'll name the matter to her, and then I'll let you know the result."

"Will you be kind enough to name the subject to her to-day?"

"I will."

"And allow me to call upon you again in the morning."

"Certainly."

"My dear sir," said D'Almaine, rising and shaking Freeman warmly by the hand, "I know not how to thank you, and therefore you must not expect me to make the attempt; but the time, I fervently hope, will soon come, when I shall be able to prove to you how highly I appreciate the goodness of your fine old English heart."

"All I can say," returned Freeman, "is this, that whatever may be the result of my consultation with my daughter, I shall be at all times happy to see you as a gentleman, and especially as a friend of Mr. Charles."

D'Almaine again shook him heartily by the hand, and when his horse had been ordered to the door, he privately gave the cheque to Jane's maid, who let him out; and with many expressions of thanks to Freeman, remounted, and gracefully took his leave.

Freeman was highly pleased with him, and shortly afterwards sent up for Jane, to whom the maid, with intense delight, had shown the cheque for five pounds.

"My dear," said he, as Jane entered the room, "why, it appears that you have become a very dangerous creature."

"Dangerous, dear father?"

"Yes, it appears that no one can see you now, without falling desperately in love with you."

Jane moved her head and smiled, but it was a smile of sadness.

"That gentleman—Mr. D'Almaine," he continued, "is so deeply enamoured of you, that he came for the purpose of requesting me to allow him to solicit your hand."

"Indeed!" said Jane.

"Yes, my dear, and a more gentlemanly man, I think I never in my life met with."

"He appears to be a perfect gentleman, certainly. But what did you say?"

"I told him that I could say nothing to it, my dear, until I'd consulted you; and when he had urged me to do so, I consented, and he is coming to-morrow morning to know the result."

"He might have known it at once, dear father," said Jane: "had you named the subject to me before he left, one word would have been sufficient. He is doubtless a perfect gentleman, and he may have conceived an affection for me, but I would not on any account deceive him."

"Deceive him, my dear! You would not deceive him! He knows all about it!"

"He does! He knows of my unhappy fall and yet seeks my hand?"

"Yes, he knows all about it."

"And would marry me at once?"

"No doubt of it, my girl."

"Then I hold him in contempt!"

"But why, my dear? He loves you, and sympathises with

you, and regards the course pursued by George with utter abhorrence.

"Father, I cannot but conceive such a proposal to be, under the circumstances, indelicate in the extreme. Look at my position! I must shortly become a mother. He knows it, you say, and would, notwithstanding this, marry me now—marry me before the child is born! Why, to *me* the idea is disgusting. No man possessing a delicate mind—no man of common decency—would dream of making such a proposal. But who informed him of this?"

"George himself."

"The wretch! Oh," she added, absolutely groaning with deep emotion, "I could—I *could* have my revenge! But no—no. Oh, *he* told him, did he?"

"He did, my dear, and Mr. D'Almaine has an utter contempt for him in consequence."

"And well he *may* have; but my dear father, this Mr. D'Almaine is no gentleman, I feel assured."

"His manners are those of a gentleman, certainly."

"They may be; but no *gentleman* would even make such a proposal as this. You know George's character well—*almost* as well as I know it myself; but how do we know that this person—this Mr. D'Almaine—is not one of his creatures, employed to come here for some purpose which may not be consistent with my safety."

"If I thought that I'd kick him out of the house."

"It may not be so; but how can we tell that it *is* not?"

"But what has your safety to do with him now? You will never be a burden to *him*. This annuity must of course be regarded as compensation for the injury you have sustained, and we can never apply to him for more."

"I am aware of it, father: but who can tell what his design may be? I am to have a clear half of the income which he was to have had: does that half revert to him in the event of my death?"

"I never thought of that; but I can ascertain, and will the first opportunity."

"It may not be so; it may revert to the estate: but how can we tell that this D'Almaine has not been for some purpose set on by him?"

"But he appears to have an utter abhorrence of his character."

"He may appear to have, with the view of blinding us."

"It may be so: certainly it may be so, and yet I can hardly think that it is. Besides, the fact of his having been struck with your appearance does not seem to me to be extraordinary at all."

"Father, every woman likes to be admired: I know not whether it is the case with every man, but certainly every woman who excites admiration and knows it, derives from that knowledge a certain amount of pleasure; but then to impart pleasure, admiration must be real, which I perceived his was not when I brought in the key. His expression of it was far too extravagant for reality. What is there in *my* appearance so startling? Say that I am moderately good-looking

—say that I am handsome, if you please—but is there anything in my countenance calculated to have so theatrical an effect upon a man as my presence apparently had upon him? No, father! this is some deeply laid scheme.”

“Well, my dear, it certainly struck me at the time that his expression of admiration was rather theatrical; but then we have heard of men who have fallen in love at first sight, and who could *not* conceal their emotions. It may, nevertheless, my dear, be as you imagine; but if he be not sincere I’m deceived. There is something so candid and straightforward about him; his manners are so gentlemanlike, and his language so kind, that it is almost impossible to believe that he has any other design than that of obtaining your hand. But it is, my dear, of course for you to judge and decide. He requires no money with you, he told me, not a shilling.”

“Oh,” said Jane thoughtfully, “he spoke of money?”

“Yes; and that makes me think him sincere. He is not, of course, aware that you have any, nor does he know that all I have will be yours. He is on that subject perfectly disinterested.”

“Doubtless,” said Jane, with an ironical smile; “but do you know what he is? Has he any profession?”

“I don’t know; I think not: but of course in the event of your becoming acquainted, I should make it my business to enquire into his character and prospects.”

“Father, I think that I see it now. George *may* have nothing to do with it: I do not now think that he has. He spoke of money, but did he not also speak of Sir John’s will?”

“He merely said that Sir John’s will sufficiently proved that Charles was the favourite son.”

“Exactly. He has seen that will; and has, doubtless, enquired into your circumstances. He therefore affects to be perfectly disinterested, so far as pecuniary matters are concerned, and foolishly squanders his money away with the view of inducing us to believe that he is wealthy.”

“But how do you know, my dear, that he foolishly squanders his money away?”

“This morning he gave the man five shillings for holding his horse. Well; that you will say was very liberal—sixpence or a shilling would have been quite sufficient; but when he left just now he gave the girl a cheque for five pounds.”

“Five pounds! What; the girl!”

“She ran up in a state of rapture to show it to me. Of course there never *was* such a generous gentleman! And then, how excessively rich he must be! This was *her* idea on the subject, and his aim was to make the same impression upon us.”

“Jane, my dear,” said Freeman thoughtfully, “you see through things farther than I can. Five pounds to the girl! What for? Had he been in the habit of dining here, and had given five pounds to be divided among the servants at Christmas, or even at any other time, I should have thought nothing of it; but the idea of giving five pounds

to a girl whom he never saw before, and who could have rendered him no service whatever, is extravagant in the extreme. Now I think of it, my dear, I saw him writing out a cheque."

"Which affords another proof that his design is to induce you to believe that he is wealthy."

"You are right—quite right. Why, my dear, you have become quite a woman of the world!"

"See what a tutor I have had, dear father. Misfortune and reflection have taught me to study motives. Even the motives of George I can understand now. I study them daily—pry into them, and see as clearly through them as if they had been by himself explained. The most corrupt motives I once thought pure: but innocence is always unsuspecting: suspicion is engendered only when confidence has been betrayed."

"Well, my dear, we don't want to talk about that. The question is, what's to be done in this case?"

"I should like to know whether I am right in my conjecture! I certainly should like to bring it to the proof, and, if you have no objection, I will do so. I'll have an interview with him in the morning."

"If you have no idea of accepting his addresses, of what use will it be for you to have an interview with him?"

"It can do no harm, and it may do good. If it be not amusing, it may be instructive."

"But that will be trifling with him, will it not?"

"Father, if his object be to trifle with me, does he not deserve to be trifled with? There are men who take delight in sporting with *our* feelings, and I believe him to be one of them; if he be, although I don't suppose that I shall sport much with his, it will be sport to retaliate a little. But he may succeed in convincing me that his motives are perfectly pure; and if he should, I shall then, of course, with your assistance, know how to act."

"Certainly you would then be better able to judge."

"Well, then, if you have no objection, I'll have an interview with him in the morning."

"Very good, my dear; then let it be so: have an interview with him, and judge for yourself. His motives certainly *may* be pure, notwithstanding the doubt which you entertain now. He may prove himself to be a man of sterling integrity, although I must say I don't like the idea of his having given that five pounds to the girl, with the view of inducing us to believe that he is rich. And yet it might *not* have been given with this view. His object might have been to induce the girl to speak highly of him in your presence."

Jane smiled, and said, "Well! if that were his object, he has certainly attained it: the girl is in raptures, and *has* spoken of him in terms of the highest admiration! We shall, however, know more about it in the morning."

D'Almaine, who returned to dine with George, was in high spirits throughout the evening. He congratulated himself warmly on having succeeded in gaining the confidence of Freeman, and felt, in consequence, perfectly secure.

"All," said he to himself, having retired for the night—"All that is necessary now, is to obtain a private interview with her. I'll soon work the oracle : I'll not be long about that. She is but a simple country girl, and can therefore be easily managed. If I find her romantic, I'll propose an elopement : if I find that she is not, I'll get a license at once, and secure her before any enquiries can be made. There must be no delay. The thing must be done quickly, and my apparent anxiety to save her from shame will seem to justify precipitation.

Accordingly, immediately after breakfast in the morning, he ordered his horse, and having excused himself to George—who, since he had discovered that D'Almaine was really poor, had evinced no particular desire to be tied to him—rode full of confidence over to Freeman's.

Freeman was at home—expecting him, of course—and Jane, who had been watching for him, saw him approach ; and when one of the men had taken his horse with all the alacrity which the prospect of gaining a crown can inspire, he shook hands with Freeman with surpassing cordiality, and in a spirit of enthusiasm entered the house.

"Well, Mr. Freeman," said he, delighted with his reception, "I trust that you have some good news for me—something of a pleasing character to communicate. You have, I hope, consulted your beautiful daughter ?"

"I have," replied Freeman calmly yet courteously ; "and the result is, that she has consented to have an interview with you this morning."

"A thousand thanks, my dear sir," cried D'Almaine, again seizing him by the hand, and shaking it heartily. "I cannot feel sufficiently grateful to you for this mark of friendship and confidence."

"If you'll do me the favour to walk into the other room with me," said Freeman, "I'll introduce you at once."

D'Almaine bowed, and followed him into the parlour, in which Jane was sitting, with her mind intent, apparently, on her embroidery. She rose as they entered the room, of course, and Freeman said, "My dear, I have the pleasure to introduce to you Mr. D'Almaine."

D'Almaine's profound bow was acknowledged by Jane gracefully, when Freeman, having placed a chair for him near the table, said to him ; "Excuse me : I shall see you again presently," and immediately left the room.

"Miss Freeman," said D'Almaine, cautiously, being anxious to measure his distance, "I know not how to express my gratitude to you for this kind act of condescension ; but believe me, I do feel grateful to you for thus giving me an opportunity of expressing the admiration with which your beauty has inspired me."

Jane bowed, and slightly smiled, and said, "Sir, the knowledge of having excited admiration is, I believe, pleasing to us all."

"True," returned D'Almaine, "true : but that which you excited in my breast was as instantaneous as it is ardent : I seek not to flatter, but I fancied, when I first saw you, that I had never beheld such surpassing loveliness before. I was absolutely *struck* with admiration—I might indeed say adoration ; and having subsequently ascertained

how cruelly you had been treated by him in whom you placed implicit confidence, I resolved on requesting your excellent father to allow me to solicit your hand."

"You are, sir, I believe, a friend of Mr. George Croly?"

"I am a friend of Mr. *Charles*, and I also enjoyed the friendship of Sir John. George I repudiate: I wish to say nothing whatever against him, but Charles is my friend."

"You are still, I believe, staying at the Hall?"

"I am."

"Still staying with the man whom you repudiate?"

"Yes, to have the pleasure of being near you."

"Does Mr. George Croly know of your having sought this interview?"

"No, Miss Freeman. I have had no conversation with *him* on the subject."

"Have you any profession, may I ask?"

"None: I live entirely on my property."

"In what part of the country is your property situated?"

"In Berkshire?"

"In what part of Berkshire?"

"Near Reading."

"You will excuse me for asking these questions, I hope?"

"Oh! they are questions which ought to be asked and answered with perfect candour."

"What may that property yield?"

"To me about a thousand a-year."

"Oh! that is an ample fortune. But Mr. D'Almaine, I hope that you're aware of the fact of my being comparatively poor?"

"I know nothing of that, my dear Miss Freeman, nor do I wish to know. Your hand and heart are all that I require to render me the happiest man in the world."

"Well sir, as you appear to have been candid with me, I will be equally candid with you. There is certainly nothing in your personal appearance to which I can reasonably object, nor can I hope to marry a man with more than a thousand a-year. Your manners too, I must confess, are elegant, while the course you have pursued in first speaking to my father, proves to me that you are a man of the world. There is, however, one point, Mr. D'Almaine, which must be settled before I can feel myself justified in consenting to receive your addresses. I have an annuity of two hundred and fifty pounds, of which you may not have been aware. Sir John left me that annuity, and it is that to which I am anxious now to draw your attention. My father, who has been most affectionate to me, occupies a large farm, of which you may have heard. I call it a large farm because it is a large farm for him, he having nearly five hundred acres of land. Now, sir, I speak to you as to a man of the world, and one who knows that there are men who work their land chiefly with borrowed capital, the interest of which nearly doubles the rent. I need not, I feel sure, dwell upon this, because you perfectly understand it; but as I am anxious to have this

annuity secured to my dear father during his life, I wish to know whether in the event of my consenting to receive your addresses, you would feel disposed to give him a bond to this effect?"

"My dear Miss Freeman," replied D'Almaine, whom the proposition startled notwithstanding he managed to conceal his alarm, "I cannot but admire your candour. Believe me, I appreciate highly the affectionate solicitude which you have manifested for the welfare of your excellent father, and I do feel disposed, and will of course consent, to secure this annuity to him. As I said before, my object is not money. With an income of a thousand a-year I think we can live in a style of affluence. I'll say nothing about magnificence, because I do not believe that that will be essential to your happiness."

"It will not indeed," said Jane calmly.

"Well then your father shall have this annuity, and with it all the assistance at our command; and now let me beg of you, for the sake of your own reputation, to consent to an early marriage."

"On that subject, Mr. D'Almaine, I of course can say nothing until my father has this bond."

"My dear, he shall have the bond certainly: I'll send to London for it to night, and in the interim I will, with your permission, procure the license."

"The license! The marriage license do you mean?"

"Yes, my sweet girl."

"Why so precipitate, Mr. D'Almaine?"

"Need I, my adored one, need I urge the inexpediency of delay?"

"Then why cause delay by sending to London for the bond?"

"My solicitor lives there," replied D'Almaine, who thought of having it drawn by a certain Jew attorney, a friend of his, in a form which would render it valueless.

"But is it absolutely necessary for it to be drawn by your solicitor, Mr. D'Almaine?"

"Perhaps not absolutely necessary, but as he has always transacted my business for me, I submit that this had better be done by him."

"Well, it certainly matters not by whom it is drawn, if it be but drawn properly."

"Not the slightest."

"I understood my father to say, that you enjoyed the friendship of Sir John."

"I for several years had that happiness."

"Very good. Mr. Cameron, whose residence is scarcely three miles from this house, was Sir John's solicitor; he also acts for Mr. Charles: and as you admit it to be of no consequence who draws the bond up, you cannot of course, as a friend of the family, object to its being drawn up by him."

"Why, my dear Miss Freeman, you of course understand that when a man has confided in a solicitor for years, a feeling of delicacy renders him unwilling to employ any other."

"Is that the only objection you have?"

"That is the only objection I can have."

"Then that may be obviated easily. I can employ Mr. Cameron. All that he will require of you, I apprehend, is your signature."

"My dear Miss Freeman, I have for years made it a rule to sign no legal document which has not been drawn by my own solicitor."

"Very well. Then let it be drawn by him, and when it has been examined by Mr. Cameron, and signed in his presence, I will give you an answer."

"It shall be done: but, in the interim, permit me to prevail upon you to consent to an early marriage."

"I cannot permit you to address me on the subject until this bond has been signed: nor even then until I have well ascertained that you are what you represent yourself to be. You will pardon me for speaking so freely, but I must remind you, that you are to me a perfect stranger, and that therefore it becomes me to act with caution."

"You are perfectly right. You ought to be, and shall be, on every point satisfied."

"Very good," said Jane rising. "Having proceeded thus far, our interview is at an end."

"You will permit me to have the pleasure of continuing to visit you?"

"I cannot consent to see you again until that point at least has been settled."

"You are somewhat too cruel," returned D'Almaine, as he made a very sad attempt to smile. "But we shall know each other better by and by. Will you *allow* me to have the honour of saluting your hand?"

"Pardon me, Mr. D'Almaine; we *may* know each other better by and by. Good morning," she added, and, having rung the bell, gracefully bowed him to the door.

Here he met Freeman, but their conference was short. "Your beautiful daughter, Mr. Freeman," said he, "has made a request, which of course shall be complied with. I shall write to town to-night, and when I receive the document, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again."

He then shook hands with Freeman, but there was a total absence of that enthusiasm with which he shook hands with him on his arrival; nor was his liberality so conspicuously developed as it had been the preceding day, for he mounted his horse and rode out of the yard without touching his pocket at all.

"No go," said he to himself. "It's all up. Too wide awake: too downy by half. She's a griffin: firm as a rock: see through a milestone: artful—rather: not to be done! This is your *simple* country girl, the girl whom you were going to carry off in no time. A likely girl to be carried off, certainly! No, it's of no use thinking anything more about *that* lot. I made a mistake; it's not to be done, and there's an end of the matter."

On his return to the Hall, he had lunch with George, and soon afterwards Corney entered the room, and announced the arrival of "a gentleman in a gig," who was anxious to speak to George privately.

"Who is he?" enquired George.

"Don't know him, sir, at all," replied Corney; "and yet I think I've seen him before, somewhere."

George left the room and the next moment stood in the august praisance of the Artful.

"What Ben!" he exclaimed. "Why, what on earth brings you here?"

"I've come to sarve *you*, sir, to put you on your guard, and I hope you won't think none the worse o' me for it."

"Think the worse of you for it? Nay, we ought to feel obliged to those who serve us."

"That's true, sir, but oughts don't take place very often. But that's neither here nor there. In the first place, have you seen or heard of that tremendous and conflagbergrastrated scoundrel, D'Almaine?"

"D'Almaine! Why he's here."

"Here! What d'you mean here, in this house?"

"Yes, he is now in the next room."

"Well, if I didn't think *as* much, as I was comin' along, may I be bound to be kicked into mincemeat!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"What's the matter! Stop a bit: *you* shall know what's the matter. But let's begin regular. Now then: didn't he, when you was in town, get out of you an I O U for five hundred?"

"Yes."

"Well now, hold hard. Look here. Thinks I to myself, directly I thought of it, he knows he's completely blown upon in London, he'll go *down* to Mr. Croly *before* Mr. Croly knows anything on it, and collar the cash for this I O U. *This* no sooner strikes my thoughts; than I makes up my mind to come down here, and so down I comes, in order to tell you that if you *pay* him a single penny you're a flat."

"Well, but why should I *not* pay him?"

"Why should you not? 'cause he robbed you. He didn't win a shilling of it fair. When you played at loo, he palmed the cards; and threw against you, the dice were loaded."

"Oh!" said George thoughtfully. "Oh! He's been up to *those* tricks, has he?"

"Up to 'em! He's bin a livin' by 'em! He's bin a livin' by 'em for years! He *is* the most tremendous thief alive; and therefore I tell you, that if you pay a penny on account of that I O U, you deserve to be robbed till you haven't a shirt,"

"But he *has* had two hundred and fifty of it."

"He *has*! Why, when did you pay him?"

"Yesterday morning."

"Has he got it about him?"

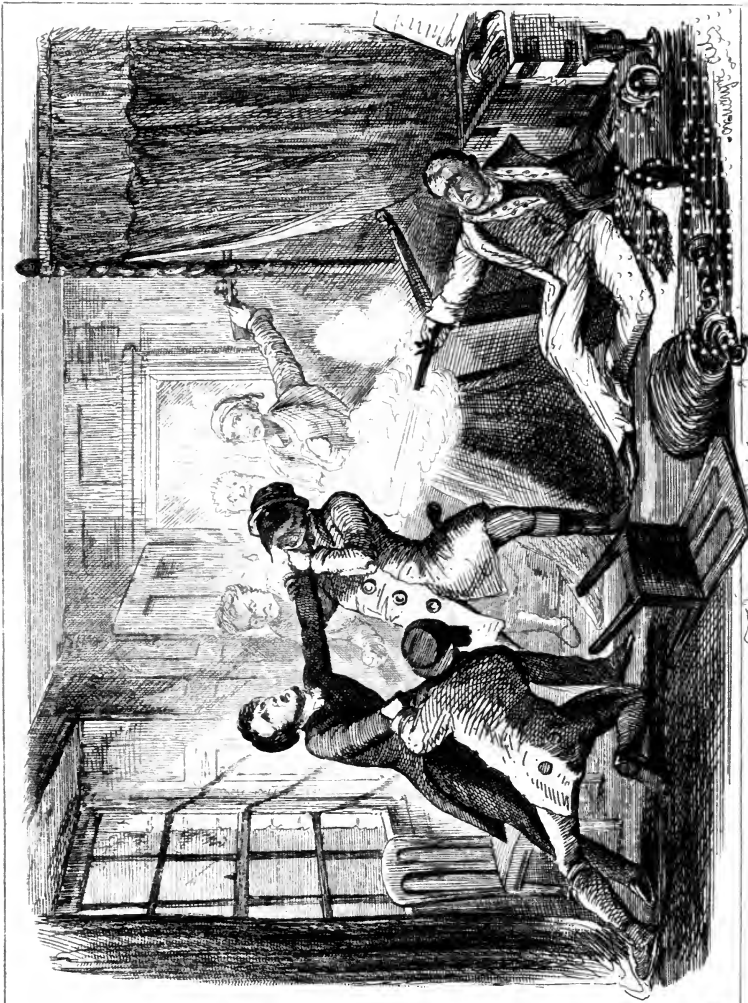
"I expect so."

"Then have it out on him — *have* it out on him *by* all manner o' mortal means! There; if I didn't think *that* would be the go as I came along, I *will* be bound to be blistered. I s'pose he was pressing — *rayther*!"





— The proof of affection. —



The Attack.

W. H. W. 1852



"He was. He offered to give up the I O U if I paid him two hundred and fifty at once."

"And have you got it?"

"I have."

"Then get back the money. *Get* it back—whatever you do, get it back."

"But how am I to do it?"

"Make him return it. If he won't, sarch him and take it away."

"I question whether I should be justified in taking it away."

"Justified! Why, what in the world have you got to fear from him? *He* can't law you—he durstn't think about it! Take my advice, sir, and get the money back."

"Shall I do so, or shall I give him a sound thrashing?"

"Do both, but get the money back first."

"Step this way, Ben. You don't mind meeting him?"

"I mind meetin' of him! I take a pleasure in it. But look here. He'll say I was in it; he'll say I assisted him in robbin' o' you. I don't care about it because I know better, but he's safe to say it—now you mark my words."

"Follow me," said George, who returned to the next room; and Ben did follow, but the moment D'Almaine caught a glimpse of him, he turned pale and trembled with violence.

"I hope you're well, Mr. D'Almaine," said the Artful. "I hope you enjoy yourself, Mr. D'Almaine. I haven't had the pleasure of meeting you before now for some time, Mr. D'Almaine."

"I feel no pleasure," replied D'Almaine, "in meeting a man who seeks to destroy my reputation."

"Your *reputation*! Well, that's rich! Why don't you say at once, and plain, 'I feel no pleasure in meetin' o' you?' I know you don't like me, Mr. D'Almaine. You don't like to see me here, do you? No; but I'll spoil you wherever you go!"

"Now, Ben," said George, "what'll you have? Come—we'll speak of this presently—what will you have?"

"I'll take a glass of sherry, sir."

"Help yourself.—D'Almaine," he added with an expression of severity, "it has often struck me as being strange that whenever I have played with you I have lost. This has been accounted for. You have cheated me—plundered me."

"No such thing, Croly," replied D'Almaine.

"Oh, ain't it no such thing?" said the Artful.

"No! I *never* cheated him in my life."

"What! Why, you vagabond, warn't it a regular plant?"

"No! I know your object well enough,—it is to blast my character."

"It appears," said George, "to have been blasted already."

"If you think so," replied D'Almaine, "I'll leave the house instantly. I'll not remain under the same roof with a man who even suspects me of dishonour."

"Stay," said George, as D'Almaine rose; "I can't spare you yet."

The money which I gave you yesterday morning, I insist upon having returned."

"What for? Why should I return it?"

"Because I feel that you have robbed me—absolutely robbed me—of more than double the amount."

"*Indeed* I have not, Croly. If I have, may—"

"Take no oaths; oaths will not convince me. Until I have proved that you really are *not* the villain you have been represented to be, I insist upon holding this money."

"Well; I should have no objection, of course, to let it remain in your hands; but I really have not got it."

"Where is it? What have you done with it?"

"I sent it to London yesterday. I told you that I wanted to make a remittance."

"Oh, you sent it to London, did you?" said the Artful. "Who did you send it to? Any respectable friend of yours?"

"That's not *your* business," replied D'Almaine.

"But," said George, "it is mine. Whom did you send it to?"

"Oh, I sent it to a friend."

"For what purpose?"

"To liquidate a debt."

"Who is that friend? What is his name?"

"Brown," replied D'Almaine, with hesitation.

"I don't believe that you have sent it at all."

"Then sarch him," said the Artful, "sarch him." There ain't many mobs of Browns in London! All you've got to do, is to sarch him."

"Have you any objection to convince us that you have not got it about you?"

"Not the slightest," replied D'Almaine, who at once proceeded to empty his pockets.

"How much have you got in that purse?" enquired the Artful.

"Oh, I suppose there's about twenty pounds."

"Well, that's some on it, at all events. He hadn't that when he left London, I know, nor not above a quarter on it."

"He won some of me," said George, "the night before last."

"Then collar what he won, it's all plunder."

"Never mind about that little lot; I want the other."

"There," said D'Almaine, "now I hope that you are convinced."

"Ain't he got a portmanteau," enquired the Artful, "or anything o' that, where his shirts and things is?"

"I have a carpet bag," returned D'Almaine, who trembled now with more violence than ever; "but there's no money there, I assure you."

"Well," said the Artful, "if that's the case, you won't mind lettin' us just have a peep."

"Why should I be thus humiliated? Croly, I appeal to you as a gentleman whether this is any thing like proper treatment."

"Have you any objection," enquired George calmly, "to open this carpet bag before us?"

"I object only to that which I cannot but conceive to be a degradation."

"Oh," said the Artful, "if that's all, *we* don't want to come no degradation. We don't want to mess your things about, but we must have a leetle peep!"

George rang the bell, and directed Corney to bring down D'Almaine's carpet bag, and when it had been brought into the room he said calmly, "Will you do me the favour to open this?"

"I'll not," replied D'Almaine, "submit to be thus degraded. I protest against it, Croly, as being monstrous!"

"It matters but little to me now, D'Almaine, what you feel disposed to submit to. Bluster is of no use here. The bag must be opened. Will you give me the key?"

"Don't trouble the gentleman so much," observed the Artful. "Such a thing as a tiny knife or a leetle pair of scissors will open it as quick as the key."

"As for you," said D'Almaine, "I hold you in contempt. If Croly *will* thus degrade me, he must."

"That bag must be opened," said George sternly.

"Well, then, I'll bring you the key; it's in one of my other pockets: but I certainly must say, Croly, that I never expected to be so insulted by you."

"That's where the money is, I'll bet *fifty* to one," said the Artful when D'Almaine had quitted the room; "and if you don't collar the lot, you're not what *I* take you to be."

"I'll have it," said George, "I'll certainly have it if it be there."

"It's safe to be there. It ain't likely he's sent it to London: it ain't half likely. There it is, and I'm just as pleased I came down in time as if the dearest friend I have had died and left me a couple o' thousand! I rayther like the look o' the bag. It's a spicy leetle bit o' machinery, and takes my fancy much because there's that individual two hundred and fifty in it."

"Well," said George, "we shall see. Come, help yourself."

The Artful had another glass of wine, and then began to manifest impatience.

"My anxiety," said he, "is begetting rayther anxious to have a leetle peep at this individual lot. He's no time gone, certney! He don't sweat about it. I did not expect he'd be in much of a hurry, because he don't like to do it at all; but I think he might have got back a leetle afore this. I want to congratulate him on his return."

"He is certainly taking his time," said George. "Perhaps he is studying how to get out of it."

"Let him study all he knows. If you let him get out of it by any mortal means, all the flats in Europe ain't dead. Well," he added as he paced the room impatiently, "I hope the gent'll excuse my feelings; but I must say, I *do* feel he's gone a tidy time. Won't you send an invitation to him? Let him know that you don't wish to hurry him by no means, only you'll be happy to have the honour of seein' him agin at his quickest convenience."

George rang the bell and directed Corney to tell D'Almaine that they were waiting for him. But Corney couldn't find D'Almaine, nor could he find that gentleman's hat; he therefore returned with the startling intelligence that Mr. D'Almaine was not then in the house.

"Not in the house!" cried George, "not in the house! Run to the stables and see if he's there. Quick!"

"Why," said the Artful, as Corney darted from the room, "he surely ain't cut it for the simple sake of savin' himself the disagreeable pain o' being forced to have the bag opened afore him!"

"If the money be there," said George, "I shall care but little about his having started."

"Shall I rip the bag open?"

"Not yet. Wait till we know whether he has left or not. Well," he added, when Corney returned, "have you found him?"

"He's been gone about ten minutes, sir," replied Corney. "He had the grey saddled, sir, all in a hurry, and galloped across the park as fast as ever the horse could lay legs to the ground."

"Tell them to saddle the chesnut mare, and bring her to the door immediately.—Cut the bag open, Ben. I'll be after him if the money should not be there."

The Artful, who had his knife ready, plunged it into the bag on the instant, and the first thing discovered was the cheque-book, which George at once opened and found just inside a receipt for the money paid in.

"*This* will do!" he cried, "I'll be after him. I, at all events, know where the money is now."

"Then, in the name of all that's infernal, fly like lightning and stop it! Can he draw it without the book?"

"Yes, he can get a cheque there; but although he *has* ten minutes' start I can get there, I think, in time to spoil him."

"Do by all manner o' mortal means. Go like shot out of a cannon. Here you are—here's the horse; now then dart off like an arrow."

George rushed from the house, and having mounted his mare dashed across the park in pursuit.

D'Almaine was, however, too quick for him. He had drawn the money out, and was on his way to Cambridge before George arrived at the bank.

CHAPTER XXV.

CORNEY'S WEDDING.

THERE is, perhaps, no change more sudden or more striking than that which is wrought in our feelings and our tastes by the unexpected possession of wealth. It upsets our views, it unsettles our minds, and constitutes the germ of a thousand ideas which had no existence before. It achieves a complete moral metamorphosis. We do not think like

the same persons; we do not feel like the same persons. The caste to which we appear to belong is superior; we feel like a different order of beings, and are too prone to look contemptuously upon the order from which we thus sprang.

It may at first sight appear marvellous that the mere fact of coming unexpectedly into the possession of a little wealth should effect so great a change, but in the great majority of cases it is so, and so it was with Corney.

He used to take delight in waiting at table; he used to pride himself upon the lustre of his plate; he used to have a refined taste for polishing mahogany; he used to derive pleasure from the sparkling brilliancy of his chandeliers; he used to seek fame for his style of cleaning copper coal-scuttles, and had frequently offered to back himself to brush a decanter up with any man in Europe! But he no sooner found himself to be a man of property than all these accomplishments became distasteful to him; he took no delight in them at all; and feeling, as he then felt, *above* his place he very soon became unfit to fill it.

Under these not at all extraordinary circumstances, he made up his mind to tender his resignation, and embraced an opportunity of speaking to George on the subject of taking a farm.

"I don't know, sir," said he, "whether Mr. Charles mentioned any thing to you before he left, sir?"

"About what, Cornelius?" enquired George.

"About a small farm, sir."

"He told me that you were anxious to have some land; but what do you know about farming?"

"I don't know no great deal about it, it's true, sir; but my father knows, sir, and he could tell me."

"Have you consulted your father on the subject?"

"Not regular *consulted* him, sir, but I've often told him I should like to have a farm."

"Well, then, enter into the matter with him seriously, and let me know the result. My impression is, that you had better join him. There's a strip of the park very near his occupation which I mean to have broken up: there may be fifty or sixty acres of it, and if that were added to his forty you might work it together. Mention this to him, and let me know what he thinks of it."

"I will, sir, and return you many thanks."

"You also think of marrying, I hear."

"Yes, sir, as soon as ever something's settled."

"And where do you think of living?"

"Don't know, sir."

"Well, if we should come to an arrangement about this land, I'll either enlarge your father's house or build you a new one. Speak to him first; there shall be no difficulty at all about a house."

"Will you give me leave to speak to him to day, sir?"

"Oh yes, certainly. Go when you please."

Corney thanked him and withdrew, and went immediately to Sarah, and said with an expression of ecstasy, "Sally, my love!—nothing but

luck: nothing but bright immortal luck! and as luck and love 'll beat a town, our fortune's now made regular."

"Any thing fresh, Cornelius?" enquired Sarah.

"Fresh! I believe you!—fresh as a daisy: I wouldn't give twopence for any thing stale. But what do you think? I've been a-conversing with Mr. George, calm—a holding a sort of a consultation with him in a regular parliamentary style, and what do you think he's a-going to do? Why, he's going to *make* a farm for us!—he's going to let us have a part of the park, and he's going to build a new house for us to live in!"

"Oh dear! that will be delightful!"

"Delightful! Did you ever know any thing like it in life?"

"But is this all settled, Cornelius?"

"Settled! I'll soon settle it. It's all settled so far as this, that I'm now going to speak to the governor about it, and if he says he thinks it 'll do, it'll be done."

"Oh! I am so overjoyed to hear it!—I do so long, dear, for something to be settled. Didn't you say you were going home now?"

"Yes, I'm off at top."

"I should dearly like to go with you."

"Then let them know you're going, and put on your things."

"There's a dear!" exclaimed Sarah, as she took his hand, and looked at him affectionately. "I feel that I love you every day more and more. You are such a good kind soul. God bless you!"

Corney kissed her, and she kissed Corney, and then ran away with her heart full of joy, and when she had put on her bonnet and shawl she accompanied him to his father's.

"Well, governor," said he, as he entered the house, and found Craske smoking his pipe in the chimney-corner, "how are you?"

"Well, I don' know, Corney, bor," replied Craske; "I feel amongst the middlins, thank God! How are yow?"

"Hearty!—and what makes me heartier is, I've got some regular out and out rattling good news for you."

"Yow have! Come along here, bor: come and sit down: I allus like to hear good news. But I thowt I sow Sarah come acrost the yard wi' yow."

"Yes, she's gone into the dairy to aunt."

"All right: well, come along: now then, what is it?"

"I'll tell you. I says to Mr. George just before I came out, says I, 'I don't know, sir, whether Mr. Charles said any thing to you about me before he left.' 'Well,' says he, 'he said you wanted to turn farmer, but what do you know about farming?' 'Well, certainly,' says I, 'I don't know a deal about it, but my father does, and he can put me in the way of it.' 'Very good,' says he; 'then talk to him serious, and if he thinks it'll do, I'm going to have a slice of the park broke up—about fifty or sixty acres of it—you can have that. But,' says he, 'I'd advise you to join your father.'"

"What! to make it a sort of a Co. consarn?"

"Yes, to add that land to yours, and make one farm of it, and work it together, stunning."

"What part o' the park is he goin' to break up?"

"This part of course, because he said it would be handy, being very near your occupation."

"Oh," said Craske thoughtfully, "Ah. Just fill my pipe for me, Corney, bor, will yow?" Atween fifty and sixty acres," he continued. "Ah. At how much an acre?"

"He didn't say: but the rent won't hurt us, seeing that it's Mr. Charles's wish, as he told me, to render us every assistance. All that Mr. George said about it was this:—'Go and talk to your father, and hear what he says, and if he thinks well of it let me know.'"

"Very good. That's all very proper, and just as it should be. There can't be no doubt about that."

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"Ah, bor, it wants a deal o' thought to know what to think at all."

"Well, but there you are!—there's the land!"

"Yes, bor, I know there's the land; but land's o' little use aroud plenty o' money to work it."

"Well, haven't I got heaps?"

"Five hundred pound, Corney, ain't no great sight to work a farm with."

"But that and what you've got put together would make quite enough, I suppose."

"It might, bor: with great care it might. But let's think o' this Co. consarn fust. I wouldn't go in Co. with any flesh but my own flesh. Them which goes in Co. must both pull one way, 'cause if they don't the Co. 'll pull 'em both to pieces. I went in Co. wi' your poor mother: for though it may seem odd that a man should go in Co. wi' his own wife, I went in Co. wi' her when we took this farm, because she had as much money as I had; but, although I tried to pull wi' her I'd allus the worst of it at Michaelmas. She allus had to drow more money than I had, and when she died she had a little heap, while I could hardly scrape enow up to pay the men! Sartney, I don't mind goin' in Co. wi' yow, because, like her, yow're my own flesh an' blood; but, if we should go in Co.—I say, if we should—we must both on us pull one way."

"Of course!" cried Corney; "of course we must, and then we should both make money like life!"

"Money ain't to be made as it used to be made: we can't get rich as we used to could: farmin' don't go so well as it did. These, bor, ain't good times for farmin'."

"Did you ever know good times for farming when farmers had to tell the tale?"

"They used to complain aroud reason, sartney; but now they've got the reason, bor, they were then aroud! Still, there's a livin' to be picked up now; but yow marn't spend a shillin', bor, more than yow're forced. Men, which when they went to market, used to put up at the first-rate inns, and pay half-a-crown for their dinner, and have a bottle o' wine a-piece arter it, and p'raps brandy and water arter that, now slip into a little cook's shop and call for three or four pen'north o' meat, and a

pen'north o' bread and a pint o' beer, and they're right on obligated to do it."

"Not they, governor! It's nothing but what I call miserly meanness. They don't want to do it. They ain't forced by the nature of their circumstancials. It ain't necessary for them which has property like me."

"Oh, ain't it? How d'yow think I live when I go to market, and I've got pooty well as much property as yow?"

"Why, you go to a tidy inn, of course, and have your dinner regular like a farmer! What's the good of being a farmer if you don't live like a farmer? *You* don't go into these beastly cooks' shops!"

"No, I don't: yow're right, bor, there; but I'll tell yow what I *do* do. I puts up at a mite of a public-house just afore yow get into the town, where I leaves my horse, and walks to market and does my business, and then walks back and has a penny loaf and a pen'north o' cheese and a pint o' beer and a squib; and when I've smoked my pipe and thought, I orders my horse, gives the man a few ha'pence, and then drives back to tea."

"Well, but don't you give your horse nothing then?"

"In course I do! But I takes my own corn and I sees him eat it! Can't trust nobody now-a-days wi' nothin'."

"And that's what you call going to market, is it! Why it ain't respectable!—not commonly respectable! I should never think a mite about going to market so."

"No, bor, yow're right. I know yow wouldn't. Yow'd like to drive a slappin' horse and dash into the town like a clargyman!"

"No; I shouldn't care about doing it *quite* so slap, but I should like to put up at a decent inn and dine with the rest of the farmers."

"Yes, and take yow're wine arter dinner."

"If they did."

"In course. But let me tell yow, Corney bor, yow couldn't go the pace wi' them which dines thusn. One thing brings on another, and expenses falls heavy on a little 'un which the big 'uns hardly feel."

"What! do you call a man a little 'un with five hundred pound?"

"As I said afore, bor, five hundred pound ain't a sight to take a farm with. It ont warrant yow in livin' as they live—payin' two shillins or so for a dinner, and then five shillins for a bottle o' wine, and smokin' out three or four threepenny cigars, when a pen'north o' bacca 'ud go just as far; an' then havin' yow'r brandy an' water arter that, an' then two or three more cigars to smoke home, and be called a 'good sort' by the waiters an' the ostlers—which they'll allus do if yow pay 'em well for it, and allus won't if yow don't: it won't do! No, bor, if we goes in Co. yow marn't swallow a sheep every time yow go to market; yow must live a little matters like as I live."

"But, I don't call that living at all! It's only just keeping the soul and bones together! I shouldn't dream of living as you live!"

"Then yow shouldn't dream of taking a farm."

"I should be better off in service!"

"I don' know yow wouldn't. Yow get well fed and clothed, and

no cost an' no care, and get well paid for bein' arout any anxiety. The seasons has nothin' to do along o' yow. The rent-day has nothin' o' do along o' yow. Yow've no rates to pay, no taxes, no tithes! Yow've no crops to be blighted, no cattle to loose, no horses to spile, nor nothin' o' that. Yow've no muck to buy, no wages to pay, no house to keep, and no waggons to break: there yow are, livin' like a gen'lman on nothin' and havin' wages to make it less than nothin', insteads of havin' to meet these here demands, which makes yow have nothin' to do but to keep continually puttin' your hand in yowre pocket."

"I shouldn't care about all these demands if I knew they were paid out of the profits on the land. What does it matter what a man has to pay if he's not overcharged, and has plenty to pay it with? If the land didn't keep on paying, *you* couldn't keep on paying, could you?"

"I don't mean to say that the land won't pay: I never said nothin' o' that: but I know, bor, and so I don't want to be told, that if yow make ends meet now, yow must be very wonderfully careful. And that brings me to the pint about whether yow'd be better off in sarvice, or whether yow'd be better off in a farm. Yow can make ends meet in sarvice arout any trouble or care, while with all yowr trouble and care yow can on'y just make ends meet in a farm. So yow see it's the same in the long run, *on'y* yow have all the trouble and care, bor, for nothin'."

"I don't mind about the trouble and care."

"No, because yow know nothin' about it."

"Well, but dash all round about trouble and care, the bottom of it is as this, you know, and that's all about it:—I must have a farm, and if you won't go in Co. with me, I'll have this land separate, for Mr. George told me this very morning, that he'd either enlarge your house or build up a new one for me to live in."

"Corney, bor, yow're a lunatic as far as land's consarned—a man which knows nothin' right well. Let me tell yow, bor—and I tell yow for yowr good—that if yow don't go in Co. along o' me, yow marn't think about farmin' at all—not that I want yow to do it for my sake, but because I know yow'll kick yowr money down. A new house wi' fifty or sixty acres o' land! How far would yowr five hundred pound go, I'll ax yow? Yow say it's all to be broken up. Very well! If it's all to be converted into arable, yow must have some pasture somewheres else, 'cause yow can't do nothin' arout grass. But let's pass over that. Yow've got this sixty acres. Sartney bein' as it's maiden land, yow won't want much muck to begin with; if yow did, eight or ten load an acre at five shillins a load with the wear and tear of horses and carts would come to a pile o' money alone! But yow won't want muck: the land's made ready, and there's yowr fine house to go into. A fine house, yow know, wants fine furniture, bor!"

"I shouldn't want it very fine! I'd have everything respectable!"

"And new?"

"New, of course,—every stick."

"Well, *that* 'ud swaller a few five-pound notes. But there yow

are, and yow'r house is furnished. Don't yow' want nothin' else? Mind, yow know, Corney, bor, yow'd ha' to buy everything yow wanted. And what would yow want? Why, besides a thousand little individdival things, such as spades, and forks, and shovels, and sacks, and skips, and barrows, and cloths, and sieves, and God in his mercy knows what; yow'd want bullocks, and sheep, and horses, and carts, and harrows, and rollers, and waggons, and harness, and seed, and ploughs, and cows, and sows; and then yow'd have to keep 'em, and keep yow'r house, and pay men's wages for eight or nine months afore yow could see a single penny on it back; and if it should be an unlucky year, it 'ud break yow all to smash to begin with. I don't say nothin' about the rent, nor the rates, nor the taxes, nor nothin' o' that; but if yow want to swaller up yow'r five hunderd at once, bor, that's the way to do it."

"I don't want to swallow it up at all," said Corney, thoughtfully; "still I see there's suffen in what you say."

"Suffen, bor! Yow'd find it suffen ontill yow had nothin'. No, bor, that wouldn't do at the cheapestest price as is. Mark my words, if yow go to farmin' at all yow must come and live wi' me. There's plenty o' room here—oceans o' room—and we don't want two sets of expenses. I *think* if that land was added to mine it would do! I do think it would do—and I think that we might with care make money. But it ain't what's made, it's what's saved that mounts up;—that's the grand secret arter all! If yow come and be wi' me, and live as I live, and look out as I do, and pull the same way, bor, we shall do well—we don't *want* to do better than we shall do then."

"Then I will do so; I'm blessed if I don't! I'll come and live here. *We* don't want no enlargement. Perhaps he'd clap on an additional rent."

"Sartney! and that's the way to look at it."

"Oh, I see it now! I'll come and live as you live, and go to market with you, and have a crust of bread and cheese regulax."

"And yow'd enjoy it, Corney, bor, all the more because it costs next to nothin'. What do we want to throw money away for? And ain't it throwin' money away when we pay for fine dinners which don't do no good? What do it matter to a man what he eats, when he's got a good appetite? Nothin'. What do it matter to a man what he eats if he's got *no* appetite? Nothin'. If yow lose yow'r appetite yow can't enjoy nothin': if yow keep it there's nothin' yow can't enjoy. To a man which is hungry a crust o' dry bread's as sweet as a chicken's to him which ain't. If yow pamper yow'r appetite, what do yow do? Why yow spile it, and what's the good o' that? It not on'y does no good, but it does yow in two ways a deal o' harm. It injures yow'r pocket and injures yow'r health, and it *ain't* wise to injure yarself both ways when there's no mortal call for it at all!"

"You're right," said Corney, "you're quite right there. I see it; I see distinct wh't you mean, although I never looked at it in that light before."

"I don't mean to say that yow ought to be mean, and eat and drink

nothin' but what's right on necessary to keep life in yow. No! Live well, but arout extravagance. If a friend drops in, bring out yowr best, and sit down and enjoy it with him; but if yow allus bring out yowr best for yowrself, the best yow have will become no matters. Besides, there's another thing, bor, to be thought on. Yow see the poor under yowr very nose, and yow can't shet yowr eyes to their cases. Yow can't say yow don' know whether they raily want or not, 'cause yow do: yow know how they're off jest as well as they can tell yow; and when anything happens, sich as accidents, or illness, or anything o' that, it does them and yow more good to assist 'em than it does to swaller bottles o' wine. I've known the price of a single bottle to set a poor man on his legs again, and many a time the price o' two has saved a whole family from the workhouse. Yow drink wine jest for the sake o' bein' thowt respectable; but which is the most respectable—swallerin' wine or assistin' the poor? Ask yowr heart, bor, ask yowr heart; that'll tell yow. Ask yowr heart: yow don't want to go a mite further than that. Talk o' wine being a luxury! I make count to say the greatest luxury I know is the feelin' which God rewards yow with when yow do good to one of his creaturs."

"Very good;" said Corney, "capital good. I allus knew what your feelings was on that point, and now I fall in with 'em wholly. I'll be guided by you. I'll not think about wine or fine dinners, or any mortal thing of the sort. I'll go in Co. with you, and come and live here."

"No havin' fine parties!—no follerin' the hounds!—no stiffcates for game, nor nothin' o' that!"

"I'll live as you live. I'll be governed by you, and do nothing but what you tell me."

"Then give us yowr hand, Corney, bor, and it's a bargain! We'll have this land and we'll work together, and we shall, with the blessing of God, do well. There couldn't be a better chance; yow couldn't have a finer start, and so Mr. George thowt, I've no doubt, when he told yow to talk to me. I know what the land is, and, what's more than all, it'll cost next to nothin' to begin with. Another bed and bedstead and two horses more will be pretty well all we shall want to buy at present; while if yow worked it yowrself and had to buy every mortal thing yow wanted to work it, the start alone 'ud swaller a pile o'money, as I've shown."

"I sec—I see. Your implements will do to prepare the land, and we shan't want nothing until we get a crop. Very good. Then that's settled. We go in Co. and we shan't want no lawyers to bind us."

"No, Corney, bor, that expense may be saved. What's mine will be yowrs, go when I may, and I hope it'll please God to spare me at least till I find yow can manage the farm yowrself."

"I hope so too, and many years after that. I should like to manage it all myself and see you look on and smoke your pipe and be happy. And now who's to speak to Mr. Gecrge? I think you'd better do it, because you know more about it than I do. Go and see him in the morning and talk the matter over."

"Well, I've no objection at all; p'raps it's better I should go, and then we can come to an arrangement at once."

"Then when I get back I'll tell him that I've named the thing to you, and as you're very much pleased with his proposal and think it a very good chance—"

"No, bor, that'll never do: yow marn't tell him nothin' o' the sort. It ain't business. If we appear too hot about it he may clap that hotness on to the rent and make it too hot for us to hold it. Business is business, bor, all the world over. If a marchant was to come to me and say, 'I want yowr wheat very much, Master Craske; it's the best I can find in the county,' I should ask him perhaps two shillins a coomb more for it than I should think of askin' in the market. On the tother hand, if I was to go to him and say, 'I want money very bad, sir, and money I must have; will yow please to buy my wheat?' he'd offer me two or three shillins a coomb less than he'd think about offerin' in the market, don't yow see! So yow're obleedged to never seem to want money; if even yow haven't a pound in the house. I know last year I wanted some money in order to make up my rent, which, thank God, I never yet was behind with, and I took a sample o' barley to market—and very fine barley it was—and I tried to sell it, and I couldn't sell it, not at a fair market price: they seemed to know I wanted money, and that's a fact, for the more I tried to sell the more they wouldn't buy: so when market was over I took it to a maltster—which I'd had many dealins with afore and allus found him straightforrard and right—and I told him exact how I was sittivated, in confidence, and what did he do?—he wanted the barley—I saw in a moment he *wanted* the barley—but, as I'd let the cat out o' the bag, what did he do? Why, he offered me jest three shillins a coomb less than I'd been offered afore—and *that* was all two shillins less than the price!—and I was then obligated to take it. Look at that! No, bor, as far as consarns business yow marn't seem to want what yow want; if yow do yow'll ha' to pay through the nose for it. Yow can tell Mr. George that yow've named it to me, and that if I can see my way clear, I've no objection to jine yow; and then yow can tell him that I'll turn 'the thing over in my mind and come and see him about it in the mornin'."

"That'll do. I understand what you mean precise. But as true as I'm alive, I didn't think you was half so wide awake as you are."

"Times, Corney, bor, makes men wide awake. Times opens their eyes, and keeps 'em open, and makes 'em see things clear. Men can no more do now what they used to could wi' safety than they can fly! Yow're obligated to keep yowr eyes open. In these times them which is asleep are swallowed by them which is wide awake—not that I want to swaller nobody—God forbid!—on'y yow must be wide awake in yowre own defence, to pervent others swallerin' o' yow."

"That's it," said Corney; "I see! I see! The very first copy I writ at school was, 'Experience teaches wisdom;' and although I couldn't brain it then, I *now* know all round about it.—Well, Sally,

my love," he added, as Sarah entered the room, "how do you get on? What have you done with aunt?"

"She's only just gone up to put on her cap," replied Sarah; "she'll very soon be down."

"Well, my dear," said Craske, "how are yow?"

"Oh, very well indeed," replied Sarah; "I *never* felt so well as I do now, I think! I hope you're well?"

"Well, thank God, I can't complain. I find I'm not quite so young as I was.—Didn't yow say it was near my fields?" he added, turning to Corney.

"Yes," replied Corney, "and I think it's staked out."

"Well then, while yow're gettin' tea ready together, I'll go and have a look at it. Yow'll stop an' have a cup o' tea, in course?"

"Oh yes! we're in no hurry at all."

"Very well, then by the time tea's ready I'll be back."

"Sally, my love," said Corney, when Craske had left the house, "come and give me a kiss, a regular right on good un: let me have an out and out stunner this time, because I've got suffen to say to you excessive."

Sarah rose and kissed him, and put his hair in order, and said that she felt very happy and hoped that his father had consented to go in Co. with him.

"He has," replied Corney, "he has consented; but before I go in Co. with him, I've made up my mind to go in Co. with some one else, and that'll be a *regular* Co., that will."

"Dear me, Cornelius, I hope not," said Sarah. "It's all very well to go in Co. with a father, but with any one else I've heard it's dangerous."

"I see no danger—not a mite. I'll go in Co. with some one else, and then I'll go in Co. with him."

"Well, dear, but who are you going in Co. with?"

"Give me another kiss—a rattler—and I'll tell you. That's the sort," he added as she kissed him again. "That's capital nice: I do love kissing, it's one of the universal luxuries of life. Now draw your chair close, and I'll tell you all about it. In the first place, the governor, as I told you before, has consented to go in Co. with me. Very good. He thinks it's a capital chance. He says so. He also thinks that we shall make money fast: I know he thinks so, although he don't say it; and I think so too."

"And so do I, dear; but if you are going in Co. with him, what necessity is there for going in Co. with anybody else?"

"There may be no necessity—no what you may call absolute necessity, only I mean to do it."

"Pray don't, Cornelius dear,—pray don't."

"I will."

"But who with, dear? *Who* do you mean to go in Co. with?"

"I'll tell you: I mean to go in Co. along o' you. Won't *that* be a Co.?" he added, as Sarah blushed, and smiled, and hung down her head, and looked through her lashes in a state of embarrassment the most intense. "Won't that be a regular stunning Co.? That's the

Co. I mean to have before I go in Co. with the governor. Do you think there's any danger in it? Will you say 'Pray don't, Cornelius,' now? What do you think of it? Eh, Sally, my love? What do you say to it?"

"I don't know, Cornelius, what to say."

"Well, but when shall it be? Only give the day a name."

"I must leave it entirely to you, dear."

"Well, but that I believe ain't quite the correct thing. That's your job, that is, I've allus understood. The man ain't got nothing to do with that at all. Now what do you say? Shall I put up the banns for next Sunday?"

"Really, Cornelius," returned Sarah tremulously, "my heart's in such a flutter I don't know what to say; but I must indeed leave it to you. I am in your hands, dear: I'm wholly yours, and therefore in your hands I'll wholly remain."

"Then I'll put up the banns for next Sunday. We shall then have three weeks more courting, which I love!—it's the nicest and most universal thing going. But don't you flatter yourself, Sally, my love, that I'm going to give it up when we're married! Not a bit of it! We can court as well then as we can now, and *won't* we?"

"I believe, dear, that we shall be very, very happy."

"Happy! What's to make us any thing but? We will be happy: we won't let any thing make us unhappy!"

"If it please God to prosper us, and keep us in health, I feel sure that we shall be happy, although we must expect to have *some* little troubles, dear!"

"We won't expect any thing at all of the sort!—we'll go on expecting nothing but happiness!—and if we live a life of courting, what but happiness can we expect? I'm not one of them which thinks courting's all over directly you come out of church! If marriage puts an end to courting, I wouldn't marry for fifty years, and then I should have that spell of pleasure without being married at all. But why should it? Why shouldn't we court just as stunning after marriage as before? We take delight, Sally, my love, in pleasing each other now, and why shouldn't we then? What wouldn't I do for you that's proper, and what wouldn't you do for me that's proper? Don't it give me pleasure to see you pleased, and don't it give you pleasure to see me pleased?"

"It does indeed, dear Cornelius."

"Very well then. Is marriage to put a stop to all this? Am I going to say directly the ring's on the finger, 'There, it's all over now: I've got her, and there's an end of it. There's no call for any more courting: I needn't pay her any more attentions: she's mine?' Or, are you going to say 'I've got him now, and now I've no call to trouble myself about him: I needn't endeavour to please him now;' I needn't try now to look smiling and pretty—except when I go out, or when any one calls: he's mine, and he can't get rid o' me?"

"Cornelius, dear," said Sarah earnestly, "I feel that you don't for a moment believe —"

"Why, of course not, Sally, my love! Believe it! Not a bit of it! You're a different sort altogether. I was only saying *we're* not going to do the thing in this style, and think because we're married there's to be no more courting. We'll go on courting like life till death. That's the way, Sally, my love! That's the way to do it! There are some men who don't care a bit about their wives, and there are women who don't care a bit about their husbands; but ain't they a parcel of universal fools? He who neglects his wife, neglects his own comfort; and she who neglects her husband, don't ruin his happiness more than she does her own."

"Very true, Cornelius: very true indeed. Oh! how I love to hear you talk: you make me cry," she added with emotion, "but it is with delight at being loved by such a man!"

"Come, come, this won't do, you know! I can't *stand* it! I'm the biggest fool in life to see a tear in a woman's eye, and especially in eyes like yours! There, give us a kiss—a good 'un! that's a beauty."

"Very pooty, Miss Sarah!" said aunt Ann playfully, having entered the room at this moment unheard. "*Very* pooty, indeed! Don't yow think I ow't to blush for yow?"

"If you do," said Corney, "she shall blush for you: I'll put you both on level ground." And he kissed her in an instant. "Now" he added, "you can both blush away."

"Do yow know I've got on my best cap?" she cried.

"I don't care for that: I ain't rumbled it much. But I say," he added, as he noticed the cap, "spirits afloat, though! you *are* coming out! Why, it's a rattler! Look here, Sally, my love!—only just look at this universal cap!"

Sarah, who had been drying her eyes privately, turned and said, "Dear me, how very rich the lace is!"

"This lace, dear," said aunt Ann, "has been made all forty year. I made it myself on my own pillow."

"What! did you lie in bed, then, all day to do it?" enquired Corney.

"Bless yowr innocence! I don't mean a pillow yow lay upon in bed, I mean a pillow yow make lace upon, yow goose!"

"Well, it's a universal rattling cap, and there's no mistake *about* it!"

Nor was there. The front was embellished with four rows of lace, while the crown was so constructed as to stick up a foot.

"As true as I'm alive," continued Corney, "you seem to be getting young again. I never saw you look more spicy in my life."

"Hold yowr rubbidge, bor, do," said aunt Ann with a smile, for she secretly felt that she looked *rather* brilliant; "don't run on so, pray."

"Oh, but it's a fact! You'll get married again, I shouldn't wonder."

"Do yow want me to box yowr ears?"

"But why shouldn't you? I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll bet you a new silk gown to a hat, that you'll go to church once within a month either as a bridesmaid or a a bride."

"Why what on airth's come to yow?—are yow crazy?"

"Not a bit of it! Will you bet?"

"Will yow hold yowr rubbidge?"

"Well, but I'll prove to you at once that you'll go. Sally and I are going to be married once within a month, and I know you'll be one of her bridesmaids, won't you?"

"I hope so," said Sarah, "I hope you will."

"I'm too old, my dear," returned aunt Ann.

"Not at all!" cried Corney. "You look as young now as you did twenty years ago! I'll make you a present of a new silk gown."

"I don't want no new silk gowns. I've got one I haven't wore for five and thirty year, and I know yow can't buy me a better than that."

"Then I'll make you a present of suffen else. Will you go?"

"That's nothin' at all to do along o' yow. It ain't yowr place to choose bridesmaids. Sarah and me can manage it, I des say, arout yowr interferin' wi' what don't consarn yow. Where's yowr father?"

"He's gone to have a look at my land, and we've got to get tea ready against he comes back."

"We've got to get tea ready! Yow'll do a rare sight towards it, des say!"

"Have you got such a thing as a ham in cut?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll broil a few slices of it, that'll be suffen!"

"Yes, and make all the hearth in a mess. I won't ha' no brilin'. Use the Dutch oven, and don't spill the grease."

Corney accordingly got the ham down, and cut a few slices and placed them very carefully in the oven before the fire; and while aunt Ann and Sarah were in the back kitchen, Craske returned from the park.

"Well, Corney, bor," said he, "I found it."

"And what do you think of it?"

"Think of it! There ain't better sile in the county! Yow can't ha' better: yow don't want better. There ain't another piece o' the park like it. Soul and bones! if we sow it all o' wheat, what a crop we shall have the first year! But don't say a word to no flesh about that until we ha' got the rent fixed."

"All right," said Corney; "I see: I see: I understand what you mean."

"It's so handy too!" continued Craske. "Jest put on yowr hat and come wi' me, and I'll show yow. Yow can see all over it from the top o' the next bank."

"Come along," said Corney, seizing his hat, "let's go and have a universal look at it."

"Yow see, bor," said Craske, as they left the house, "being as it's maiden sile—and sile of a capital sort—it'll produce more arout any muck at all than land that's been used 'll produce wi' ten load o' muck an acre. Look at that!"

"Stop a bit!" said Corney. "I must learn by degrees, you know, —a little at a time. Have you got such a thing in life as a pencil?"

"Here yow are, bor; here's one, and the back of a letter."

"Now then: ten load an acre. How much a load?"

"I reckon, if yow had to buy it all, it 'ud cost yow by that time yow got it on the land all six shillins."

"Six shillings. Well, that's three pound an acre. Three pound. Why that, for sixty acres, would cost a hundred and eighty pound."

"That's right. Now all that'll be saved!—don't yow see?"

"Yes: well now then: how much do yow reckon it 'll grow?"

"Well, last season was a good un, sarney, and I grew twelve coomb an acre; but we marn't expect that allus."

"Twelve coomb an acre: and this land you say 'll grow more!"

"If, by the blessing of God, next season be as favourable as the last, I shouldn't be at all surprised if this land perduces fourteen."

"Fourteen. Very good. At how much a coomb?"

"Well, I doubt, Corney, bor, it 'll be lower. I got thirty shillins for mine; but it'll be lower, I doubt."

"Well, say it comes down to a pound! Fourteen sixties. Four noughts nought, for six twenty-four: once nought's nought, once six is six. Nought, four, eight. Why that's eight hundred and forty pound! Here, take your pencil, and don't say another word about it."

"Ah, but Corney, bor, there's a heap o' deductions."

"Never mind about the deductions now; we'll reckon them up another time. Eight hundred and forty pound! Come along, and let's have a look at the land."

"Well, here yow are! If yow'll jist help me up o' this bank, I'll show yow."

Corney who was then in a state of enthusiasm, tock hold of him and tried to lift him up.

"What on airth are yow arter?" cried Craske. "Is *that* the way to help a man up of a bank, to go behind him, and push him like pisen behind? Get up yowrsel' fust, and then give us yowr hand. There," he added, when Corney had pulled him up, "that's the way to do business! Now then, yow see these here stakes here, don't yow?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's the bounds o' this side. Yow see yon fence there ever so far away?"

"Yes, I see."

"That's the bounds o' the tother; and if yow take from here to yon plantation, there yow are!—yow have it all afore yow."

"That'll do," said Corney, "stunning! I like the look of it universal: but more universal than all is the thought of what it'll yield: eh governor? Come along—but stop: I know you must have things regular: am I to stand here and let you down, or am I to get down first and help you?"

"Go along wi' yowr rubbidge. I don't want yowr help. It's on'y the gittin' up as strains my lines."

"Here, get on my back, and I'll run down with you."

"I'll lay this stick acrost yowr back, yow young dog, if yow don't get out o' the way wi' yow."

Corney laughed and jumped off the bank, and when Craske had slipped down gradually, he took Corney's arm and returned to the house.

As they entered, aunt Ann and Sarah looked at each other, and seemed highly pleased about something. Corney saw their glances and half-concealed smiles, and he watched them narrowly; but the cause of their merriment was to him unknown.

"Governor," said he, at length, "there's a mystery here: there's some universal species of freemasonry going on between these here two people."

"Hold yowr nonsense, do," said aunt Ann, "and come and sit down, and have a comfortable tea."

"I know there's suffen," continued Corney, "I know there's suffen up."

"Never yow mind about that, bor," said Craske. "Women's full o' secrets, all on 'em: if they wasn't, they wouldn't be women. Come along, bor, never mind them."

They sat down, and Corney had a plate placed before him with a round cover over it, which he removed, and exclaimed, "Why what's this? A lot o' cinders?"

"They're yowr slices o' ham," said his aunt. "Yow can't complain o' yowr own cookery, can yow? They look nice an' relishin', don't they?"

"Spirits afloat! why they're done to a coal."

"Well, yow undertook the job. I hope they're done to yowr likin'?"

"Yow're rayther onfortnate in yowr cookery," said Craske. "Yow cooked the elder wine, didn't yow?"

"As true as I'm alive, when you came in, I wholly forgot all about em."

"And when we came in," said aunt Ann, "they was blazin'."

"Never mind, Cornelius," interposed Sarah, "I've got a nice one for you here."

"There's a love. Aye! this is suffen like. Then that's what you were laughing at, was it?"

"It was," replied his aunt, "because I'd jist been a tellin' on yow not to interfere wi' things which dont at all consarn yow."

"Well," said Corney, "one thing's clear; although I clean forgot the ham, I was after suffen of more universal importance."

"Yow're right!" cried Craske, as he slapped him on the shoulder.

"A plate o' ham's nothin' to that, bor, eh? But now, look here," he added seriously; "whatever we say about this consarn, we say amongst ourselves, and it marn't go no fuder. There ain't no call for it, and so it marn't be. We're now what I call one family, and I hope we shall allus be happy and united, and allus pull together one way. What's for the good o' one on us, is in course for the good of all on us; and I make count to say—I see my way clear to say—that if we be steady and careful, and industrious, we shall, wi' the blessin' o' God, prosper."

"I'll work like a horse," cried Corney.

"And so will I," added Sarah.

"I allus did work," said aunt Ann, "and so in course it won't be nothin' new to me."

"There 'll be no call at all," returned Craske, "for any on yow to work much—not what I call work. Yow women people can attend to yowr own consarns, and we can attend to ourn."

"That's about the size of it!" cried Corney; "for my part, I'll go in like hunting."

"There's no call to go in like huntin'. The steadier and the quieter the better. I shan't want yow, bor, to plough, or to mow, or to reap, or to throsch, or to do any thing o' that! All I shall want yow to do, bor, will be to larn things, to look wi' me arter the men, and do the figurin', and I know yow're a good figurer: I see that jest now, and practice 'll make yow do it capital: and now I think on't, we must have some more figurin' afore yow go, 'cause if we don't yow'll run away wi' the notion that we're goin' to make a independent fortune all at once!—which we can't do no how; there's a heap of expenses."

"I'll go into it," said Corney, "I'll turn the heap over. I'll look o' both sides o' the hedge and see what's o'clock!"

Tea was quickly despatched, and when Craske had filled his pipe, they went into the whole matter calmly, and although Corney certainly felt surprised at the number of expenses which he had to put down, the result was highly satisfactory even to him, and when he and Sarah left for the night, their bright prospects filled them with rapture.

In the morning, Craske called upon George, and when they had had some preliminary conversation, they went to look at the land together.

"Now, Craske," said George, having pointed out the boundaries, "I intended to work all the land I broke up myself, on my brother's account of course; but I offer this to you because I know that you and Cornelius were respected by my father, whose death we cannot sufficiently deplore."

"We can't indeed, sir," said Craske; "he was a good man, sir, he was."

"He was a good man, Craske; he was a good man."

"And if he which killed him, sir, hadn't been mad, he owt to 've had his *heart* torn out of his body!"

"Well," said George, who involuntarily started, "we'll not pursue this sad subject. We cannot but feel the loss like Christians, but we must bear it like Christians."

"Very true, sir. It must ha' been a heavy blow to you."

"It was. But now, let us turn our thoughts to something else. What do you think of this land? Don't you think that it will break up exceedingly well?"

"Very fair, sir, no doubt."

"Then what do you say to it?"

"Well, sir, if the rent's right, I should like to undertake it. You know, sir, farmin' don't go so well as it did! Whereabouts 'll be the rent, sir?"

"Well, Craske, I have no wish to make a market of you. Let it be added to that which you now hold at the same rent, and on the same conditions."

"Then, sir, there shan't be two words to the bargain. On them terms, sir, we'll have it."

"Very well. It will do you good, Craske: I know that it will, and you know it quite as well as I can tell you. I can only say that no other man should have it."

"I'm much obleeged to yow, sir, for the preference, and return yow many thanks. When shall we have possession, sir?"

"As soon as you please. Meet me at Mr. Cameron's to-morrow at twelve, and as it is but an addition to your present occupation it can be easily, I apprehend, added to your covenant."

"My son, I suppose, sir, had better be there too?"

"Yes, we shall want his signature: and whatever money he may require to begin with, Mr. Cameron will let him have at once."

Craske bowed and felt that this was very kind indeed, and when George, who was himself a good farmer, had explained what in his judgment ought to be done, they returned to the Hall and had lunch together, and then drank a bottle of wine.

"Now," said George, when Craske, whom the wine had confused, was about to leave with many expressions of thankfulness, "I am going to discharge Cornelius at once."

"I hope, sir," said Craske with a look of apprehension, "he ain't been doin' o' nothin' wrong?"

"Not at all!" replied George. "But you want him at home, and he ought to be at home: he is losing time here."

"But I wouldn't have him leave, sir, onhandsome for the world!"

"I know it," said George, who at once rang the bell. "I know it, and therefore I'll discharge him."

"But if he can be, sir, of any mortal sarvice to yow—if he puts yow to the leasest nonplush by leavin'—pray don't let him leave."

"Don't distress yourself at all about that. He is an excellent servant, and I should, under any other circumstances, be sorry to part with him; but as it is, he ought not to remain here.—Cornelius," he added, as Corney entered the room, "I've no desire to get rid of you—very far from it; but under existing circumstances, I think that you had better leave at once."

"As you please, sir," returned Corney.

"You have much to learn, Cornelius, and the sooner you begin to learn the better. I have to meet you at Mr. Cameron's in the morning, and instead of meeting you in the character of a servant, I should like to meet you as one of our tenants. You can therefore leave immediately."

"And Sarah, sir: will you be kind enough to allow her to leave too?"

"Yes, Cornelius, she can also leave."

"Onderstand, Corney, bor," interposed Craske, whose face was as red as fire, and into whose head Corney at a glance perceived that the-

fumes of the wine had mounted, "yow ain't discharged cause yow've done nothin' wrong, yow know, or nothin' o' that —"

"No, no," said George, who saw how the case stood. "Cornelius understands me. At twelve to-morrow," he added, as he rose to leave the room, "we meet at Mr. Cameron's. Good morning."

"I say, govornor," said Corney, when George had retired, "you've been drinking too much!"

"Well, Corney, bor," replied Craske, with a sleepy expression, "I think—I don' know—but I think, bor, I have."

"But how came you to do so?"

"He made me, and what was I to do? He's a good fellow he is: I know he is!—I don't care what yow say, Mr. George's a good fellow."

"Well, but what have you been drinking?"

"Why, let me see, bor. We had two bottles o' what he called stout: but that was no matters—I didn't like that—it's made, I 'spect, o' treacle and coffee. Well then, we had some nice stuff—what he called curious O, or suffen o' that—like ile—that was nice that was—capital good—and then we had a bottle o' sherry wine atwixt us."

"But how came you to drink so much when you know that you can stand so little?"

"He said it wouldn't hurt me! No more it won't. I feel, Corney, bor—I feel—capital. Ain't yow got another glass?—jist one more glass—another glass 'ud be jist the thing."

"You've drank it all! the decanter's empty."

"Then they've guv short measure. I don't care what yow say, Corney, bor!—they've guv jist one glass short."

"I'll give you a glass of suffen else," said Corney, who at this moment saw George mount his horse. "But don't stir!—Keep where you are—don't attempt to move till I come back."

"I won't, bor, I won't. Whatever makes me feel so sleepy I can't brain!"

Corney left him and soon returned with a bottle of soda-water, which he proceeded to open, and said, "Now look here!—you must drink it right off."

"Is it tipsy stuff?" enquired Craske, "'cause if it is, I won't have it. Now, is it tipsy stuff?"

"No, it isn't! It'll do you good, if you'll only drink it off!"

"Well, bor, well, if yow say it's good, I'll drink it, if even it gets in my head."

Corney untwisted the wire and cut the string, when the cork flew out with a bang!

"Soul and bones!" cried Craske, "why, what's that?"

"Only the strength of it! Now, then, up with it!—drink it right off at a draught!"

Craske couldn't do this. The effervescence puzzled him; he drank about half of it, and then stopped for breath, and having called it particularly nasty, he, with great resolution, rejected the rest.

"D'yow want to pison me in my old days!" he cried. "Why, of

all the rubbidge as ever was swallowed, this is the nastiest rubbidge of all !”

“ Never mind,” said Corney, “ so long as it does you good. Now look here, governor ; you come and sit here, and don’t attempt to move a peg till I come back again. I shan’t be long,” he added, as he placed him on the sofa. “ I’ll be back in no time. Now lie still.”

He then ran into the stable-yard and said to one of the grooms, “ Harry, Mr. George has been making my old governor tipsy. I want to get him home. Can’t you manage it any how ? ”

“ Of course,” replied Harry.

“ I don’t want the rest to know it.”

“ Of course not. We’ll do it all right. We’ll get him in the fly ; he’ll be snug enough there.”

“ Come the back way then, and help me to get him in at once. You can put the horse to, you know, afterwards.”

“ All right,” said Harry, and followed him in, when they led Craske quietly out of the house and lifted him into the fly.

While the groom was putting the horse to, Corney ran back and told Sarah what had passed between him and George.

“ We are free now,” he added, “ to go when we like ; he don’t want no warning at all, and so if you’ll get your things a little matters together, we’ll go home and be independent.”

“ Oh dear, how delightful !—I’m so overjoyed !—it’ll be such a beautiful change ! ” cried Sarah. “ But let me see your good father, dear, before he leaves.”

“ He’s now off at top,” said Corney, “ in the fly.”

“ Why, I thought he came on horseback ? ”

“ So he did, but I’m going to take him home in the fly, stunning. He *shall* be a gen’lman for once.”

“ Well, I must go and ask him how he is.”

“ Better not, Sally, my love : it’ll only delay the time. I shall be back pretty well in the twinkling of an eye.” And having kissed her, he ran back and entered the fly in which Craske was asleep, and they started.

They were not long going—the distance was not great ; and when they stopped before the house, aunt Ann was in a flutter : she imagined that some religious lady had called, and was therefore about to put on another cap ; but when she saw Craske lifted out of the fly—for Corney got behind him and guided his body, while the groom very dexterously handled his legs—she rushed out of the house in a state of alarm, exclaiming, “ Oh my poor brother ! Oh God ! what has happened ! Corney ! for heaven’s sake, tell me at once ! Has he fell off his horse ?—has he killed himself ?—has he broken his legs ? ”

“ No ! no ! ” cried Corney. “ *He’s* all right.”

“ But is he hurt ? ”

“ No ! Not a bit of it. He’s only a little tipsy, that’s all ! ”

“ Tipsy ! ” exclaimed aunt Ann, whose indignation on the instant

supplanted her alarm. "Topsy!—Oh the beast! What ha' *yow* bin a-makin' on him tipsy?"

"No," replied Corney. "I'll tell you all about it by and by: just let's get him in. Now, then, I *say* you know, governor," he added, "you can make a better walk of it than this! Come!"

"All—hic!—right, Corney, bor," said Craske, whom the shaking he had received had awakened. "All right!"

"It is right, yow tocksticated beast: right, indeed! I should be wholly ashamed o' myself—I should!"

"Don't say anything to him now," said Corney. "It wasn't his fault."

"Not his fault! What, not to go guzzlin' and swillin' like this! I've no patience with him!—don't tell me!"

By dint of great exertion, Corney and his friend succeeded in getting Craske into the house, while aunt Ann's glib and indignant tongue rattled away with surpassing velocity. Had he been killed, or had he broken his ribs or his legs, he would have been everything that was good; but as he was only tipsy, he was everything that was bad;—so great is the difference in the feelings created by our misfortunes and our follies in the minds of those who love us!

"I think," said Corney, "we'd better get him up to bed at once?"

"Do what yow like," replied aunt Ann. "It makes no odds to me: I'll ha' nothin' to do with him!—I'll have no truck with a tocksticated man. Where's he bin?—who's bin with him?—what's he bin drinkin'?—where did he get it?"

"At the Hall," replied Corney. "Mr. George made him tipsy."

"Then Mr. George owt to be ashamed of himself, and I shouldn't mind saying so, flat to his face! Then, I 'spose he's tipsy too?"

"Not he," replied Corney. "That's how the governor was taken in! But give us a lift, Harry: let's get him to bed. I can carry him up if you'll help me to get him on my back and push behind."

On Corney's back Craske was accordingly placed, and when they had got him up stairs they laid him on the bed, took his handkerchief and boots off, covered him up, and then returned to aunt Ann, who had burst into tears.

"Well, it's never worth cryin'g about," said Corney. "His intellects have got it certainly universal, but he'll soon get over that."

"I look at the disgrace of the thing," said his Aunt. "He ain't bin so afore for over forty year!"

"Well, if a man gets tipsy only once in forty years, I don't think we need say a great deal about it."

"But what'll the world say?"

"Certainly, it's very important what the world says on the subject, but that particular individual part of the world which knows anything about it ain't a sight, for there ain't a soul in Europe—and I don't suppose there's one in any other part o' the globe—which has the slightest notion of it, with the exception of Harry, you, and myself,

so that we three form all the world we've got to fear, and all the world that can say a word about it."

"Don't Sarah and the rest then know of it!"

"No! We let him out quiet, and clapped him into the fly without being seen by any flesh alive."

"Where, then, was Mr. George?"

"Oh! he had mounted his horse, and was off before the governor turned up so tipsy."

"Well, I'm very glad nobody knows it but us: it would be sich a thing to be talked about. How did yow leave him?"

"Fast asleep."

"Did yow undo his neckcloth?"

"Yes, *he's* all right."

"Don't say nothin' about it, Mr. Henry,—pray don't."

"Not a word," replied Harry. "I know myself better."

"Well, yow'll have suffen to take afore yow go?"

"Yes," said Corney, "he'll have a glass of your stunning and universal elder wine, and I'll have a glass with him, and you'll have one too."

"No, bor, I dussent; it'll get in my head. Yow'll find it just inside the closet," she added, and then went to see how her brother was lying; and when she had carefully re-adjusted his pillow, she returned and pressed Harry to have a second glass.

"Well," said Corney, "would you like Sarah to come to-day and have a cup of tea with you?"

"I should all that, bor. I love that girl: she's such a nice, steady quiet thing: and so kind, and so affectionate! I love her as much as if she was my own."

"Then I'll bring her. We've both left service now."

"Left service?—what a'ready?"

"Yes: it's all settled about the farm, and Mr. George said he should like to meet me in future, not as one of the servants, but as one of the tenants; so that we're quite free now, both of us, and as such I'll bring her to have a cup o' tea with you."

"Do, Corney, do, bor; and don't yow be late; yow'r father'll want a cup directly he wakes up.—Mr. Henry, come, have another glass afore yow go."

"It's capital wine, I must say," returned Harry. "But suppose you was to make *me* tipsy, whose fault would it be?"

"That won't make yow tipsy, bor!—that won't hurt yow! Come along, and have another glass."

Well: Harry had another glass, and so had Corney, and when they had taken leave of aunt Ann, they mounted the box, and returned to the Hall.

Sarah, being anxious to accompany Corney, had got her things together before he returned; and when she saw him and Harry come back with the fly, she went into the yard to meet him.

"Well, Sally, my love," said he, "how do you get on?"

"I'm quite ready, dear," replied Sarah.

"Well, Aunt fully expects you. She seemed quite delighted when I told her you were coming. You've become quite a favourite! You cut me out altogether! She loves you, she says, as much as if you were her own!—not that I wonder at that a sight, but it's clear that you've won her heart wholly!"

"She's a dear, good, kind, motherly soul," said Sarah, "and I'm sure we shall live very happily together."

"No doubt of it, my girl! Well, shall we go now?"

"Oh, I'm ready, dear; but you'll put on your private suit of clothes, will you not?"

"Why of course! I forgot all round about that! Of course, I'll put 'em on! It *would* have been a go if I'd left in livery. Are your boxes corded?"

"Yes, dear: I got James to cord them up for me."

"Very good: then we can send one of our men for 'em. And now, my girl, while you are saying good bye, and putting on your bonnet and shawl, I'll go and change my clothes. I shan't be long about it—and then we'll leave stunning, universal, and independent!"

Sarah smiled, and he kissed her, and ran to his room and proceeded to put on his private clothes, which—having originally belonged to George—imparted something *distingué* to the characteristic respectability of his appearance; and when he had satisfactorily completed his toilet, he and Sarah left the Hall, and proceeded—as he observed—"like a perfect pair of independent people to their future preternatural and universal home," where aunt Ann received them with feelings of pride.

Poor Craske was still asleep. During the absence of Corney, aunt Ann had been up to look at him at least twenty times, and she went up twenty times more before he awoke; and when at length he with difficulty opened his eyes, he looked and felt perfectly bewildered.

"Why, Ann," said he, in fitful and confused accents, as he saw his really anxious sister standing by his side. "Why—what—why—where—"

"Don't talk to me!" exclaimed aunt Ann, in assumed tones of anger. "I can't trust myself to talk to a man which gets tipsy. To come home in such a state o' beastly toxtication! I'll send Corney up to talk to yow!"

Craske rubbed his eyes as his sister left the room, and tried hard to collect his scattered senses; but before he was able to bring his mind to bear upon any distinct point, Corney appeared with a cup of strong tea.

"Well," said Corney, "how do you feel now?"

"Corney, bor, I don't feel no matters. But tell me: what's the meanin' o' this? I can't remember nothen'!"

"You recollect going over the land with Mr. George?"

"Yes, and then we had sussen to eat together, but I can't recollect nothen' else."

"Then I'll tell you without going far round about it. He made you tipsy, and I brought you home."

"I hope I didn't do nothen' wrong?"

"Not a bit of it."

"I didn't offend him, I hope?"

"Not at all! When he'd done the trick, he left you and me together, and when I found that you'd caught it so universal, I got you very privately out of the house, and brought you home in the fly like a gentleman."

"But didn't they see me there?"

"Not a soul, with the exception of Harry, and Harry's as close as an oyster."

"Well, I hope I didn't do nothen' wrong?"

"Now, don't fret your intellects at all about that. All's as right as possible. Do you drink this tea, and go to sleep again. Does your head ache?"

"It's very sadly, Corney, bor: but it ain't a natteral ache, it's a onnatteral suffen as shoots from one temple to the tother like a knittin' needle dartin' backwards an' forrards throw the brain."

"Well, drink this up and go to sleep again. You'll feel better in the morning."

Certainly Craske hoped that he *should* feel better: he felt that there was plenty of room for improvement; and he seemed to derive consolation from the thought, that if he didn't feel better, he couldn't feel worse.

Corney having accomplished the object of his mission, returned to Sarah and his aunt, with whom he spent a very happy and a very merry evening; and when aunt Ann had taken up a basin of nicely made gruel to Craske, and had communicated to him the intelligence that in her gentle judgment it was more than he deserved, she kissed him and retired with Sarah for the night, leaving Corney—who told them that he wanted to think—alone.

And Corney did think: he thought that, being to all intents and purposes then a farmer, he ought to smoke like a farmer; and he filled one of his father's pipes, and took his father's seat, and began to smoke bravely; but as this pleasing accomplishment was altogether new to him, he was soon overpowered, and when aunt Ann came down in the morning, she found him fast asleep in the chimney-corner.

"Why, what on airth's come to the men!" she exclaimed with an expression of the most intense astonishment. "Corney! Why Corney!" she added, shaking him with violence.

"Hollo!" said Corney, on opening his eyes.

"What ain't yow bin in bed?"

"I suppose not," said Corney, who saw that it was light. "I suppose I dropped off to sleep here. I suppose the pipe sent me to sleep."

"What, ha' yow bin a smoking?"

"I had a try at it last night."

"There bor, there, don't yow git into that fashion. You'll never be good for nothin' if yow do. Look at yowr father. Take warning by him. He's never happy at home arout a pipe in his mouth. There

he is *smoke*, smoke, smoke—*smoke*, smoke, *smoke*, continivilly come in when he may. I'm sure it's enough to quackle a nation. I wish the nasty 'bacco was a guinea an ounce, that I do! See what it costs him, and what good is it? Suppose he'd put by all the money he's spent in 'bacco since his young time! I'll warrant it costs him all two pence a-day, and he's bin' smokin' nigh sixty year. I was reckonin' on it up the other night jist for a fancy, and what do yow think it comes to? Why, pooty well two hundred pound!—look at that! Don't yow get into no sich habit; if yow do, mark my words, bor, you'll never leave it off."

"I shouldn't want to leave it off if I could manage it: it is such a social luxury; but if it's allus going to serve me as it did last night, it won't cost me much for tobacco. But," he added with a yawn, "I feel rather chilly. I'll have a regular rattling good wash, and then I'll go up and see how the governor is."

He washed himself accordingly, and felt refreshed, and immediately afterwards Craske came down, looking very queer, and feeling very nervous.

"Well," said Corney, "how are you now?"

"Nothen' to brag on, bor," replied Craske, as he shook his head mournfully,—“nothen' to brag on.”

"I wonder yow don't feel ten times worse," observed aunt Ann, with some asperity. "I wonder yow haven't a head-ache fit to craze a town. If people *will* get tipsy, they must in course expect to suffer for it."

Craske, who had no inclination then to enter into anything of a controversial character, put on his hat; and, having beckoned to Corney, left the house, and Corney followed, and they went together to look at the pigs, and then walked about the farm until breakfast time, and on his return Craske felt a little better.

"This ain't a good example to set *yow*, Corney, bor," said he while they were at breakfast; "but this is the on'y mornin' for the last forty year that I haven't been able to eat."

"No," said aunt Ann, who felt herself bound to be severe in order to be coaxed a little, "because this, for the last forty year, is the on'y time yow've bin and got tipsy. Them which drinks much can't expect to eat much. If yow get tipsy the over night, yow marn't think o' eating a good breakfast in the mornin'. I'm sure, for my part—"

"Now Ann," said Craske, imploringly, "I don' know how it was, but so it was: all I know is, I've suffered enough for it. Now give me a kiss Ann, and say no more about it."

"That's the way to settle it universal," cried Corney. "There," he added as his aunt kissed her brother, "there's an end of it now: it's all over and done with."

Aunt Ann said no more on the subject. She had accomplished the only object she had in view: she had proved her influence, and was happy.

"Well, now then, governor," said Corney after breakfast, "what's

to be doie? Come, I want to go to work. There's plenty of time betwixt this and twelve."

"Yow're not fit to work, Corney, bor," replied Craske. "Yow're not dressed for workin'. Yow marn't wear them clothes every day. Yow must have a stout velveteen jacket and a strong pair of corduroy breeches and leggins, and a pair o' boots to lace up and keep out the wet: them shoes o' yowrn ain't fit to walk across the land in."

"They are rather thin," said Corney, "certainly they are; but they were only made to run about the house in. I must have a pair of the right sort made."

"There's a man down yonder as lives next to Conks's, which 'll make yow a pair worth the money. He calls 'em invisible boots, which the tongues is sown under the uppers and keeps out all manner o' slush."

"Invisible boots! what, can't you see 'em when they're on?"

"See 'em! What's the good of havin' a pair o' boots yow can't see? Yow may as well have none at all."

"Well, but if they're invisible how *can* you see 'em?"

"I don't care: that's what he calls 'em, and capital strong boots they are."

"Then I'll send for him to measure me at once. What's his name?"

"Jonathan Crow. Send Bill: there he is."

Bill was accordingly despatched for Mr. Crow, who, being a very active person, with very little flesh on his bones, soon appeared.

"Jonathan," said Craske, "I want yow to make my son here a pair o' boots—yowr invisible boots, don't yow call 'em?"

"The invincibles, sir," replied Mr. Crow. "I call 'em by that name, sir, 'cause the water can't conker 'em."

"Well, I knowed yow called 'em suffen. Yow'd better take his measure."

"Much obleedged to you," said Crow, who, having placed a chair for Corney, dropped at once upon his knee. "You don't want 'em very heavy, sir, I 'spose?"

"Make him a good strong sarviceable pair," said Craske, as if Corney had no voice at all in the matter,—"*fit to stand slush and muck about his getting wet-footed.*"

The measure was taken, and when Mr. Crow, having called Craske aside, had drawn five shillings of him to purchase the leather, he very respectfully took his leave.

"Well," said Corney, "now the boots have been ordered, I'd better get measured for the clothes! What do you say?—will you make yourself tidy, and start at once?"

"There's plenty o' time, bor, atwixt this and twelve."

"There won't be much to spare. It'll take you some time to polish up: it'll take us some time to get there; it'll take me some time to get measured, and then it'll be about time to go and meet Mr. George."

"Well, it'll be ten afore we *can* start," returned Craske, "so I'll e'en go and put on my things. I must get shaved there, for I sartney can't shave myself this mornin'."

"Well then, go up at once; and then, you know, we shan't want to hurry ourselves."

Craske went up at once, and proceeded to dress, while Corney ordered the horse and gig, and had a little "universal courting" with Sarah; and when Craske was ready, they had a mug of ale and started, and at twelve precisely met George.

As they entered Mr. Cameron's office, George smiled, and held out his hand to Craske, who took it and shook his head significantly; and when Mr. Cameron had read over the document which required their signatures, they signed it, and shortly afterwards left George there.

"Well," said Corney, as they quitted the house, "that job's jobbed, and we haven't been long about it. It's wonderful what a deal can be done by only just writing your name."

"Ah, Corney, bor, yow're right about that, but we marnt be too fond o' doin' on it."

"Well, now governor, what say you—what shall we do? We'll have either a lunch or a dinner, which you like. I vote for a dinner, and if I'm in the majority, we'll dine like a pair of magnificats. It's all settled now universal, and we mustn't let this day pass without sealing it with suffen: what say you?"

"Corney, bor, we don't want to go to no extravagance, but this is yowr day, therefore do what yow like; on'y let me do what *I* like, bor, for the time to come."

"Agreed!" cried Corney, "and here's my hand upon it. In future I'll allus be guided by you, but to-day, you know, is a day of days, and we must have a glass of wine upon it. Come along."

Having reached the inn at which they put up, Corney ordered a very nice delicate dinner, and then took a stroll with his father round the town, and met George, who insisted upon their having a glass of sherry with him; and they had a glass of sherry, and sat and chatted with him freely, but respectfully, until the time they had named for dinner had arrived, when they left him and returned to their inn.

As nothing substantial had passed his lips that morning, Craske by this time felt that he could eat a good dinner, and he ate a good dinner—a very good dinner, to which the wine—for they had a pint of sherry between them—imparted an additional zest, and when they had finished, Corney ordered a bottle of port.

"A pint, bor, a pint 'll be oceans!" said Craske.

"Now look here!" returned Corney. "You know the agreement! Don't interfere with things which to day don't concern you. We'll have a bottle, and that shall be our stint. We won't have any more! we'll make up our minds to that before we begin, and then we shan't knock over the traces."

The bottle of port was accordingly brought in, with some pipes and tobacco for Craske; and they sat, and sipped, and chatted gaily, and felt their hearts warm and joyous, and dwelt upon their prospects with a species of enthusiasm! And while Corney was driving him home to tea, Craske declared that he never felt better in his life.

The next morning instructions were given for the banns to be pub-

lished, and from that time till the day which had been named for the wedding, the preparations—which were on a scale commensurate with the exalted views of the parties concerned—created an extraordinary sensation.

Aunt Ann and Sarah were inseparable, and as the former was delighted with the prospect of having the latter to live with constantly, she insisted upon paying a clear half of the expenses of the proposed entertainment out of her own private purse, and resolved, in conjunction with Craske, on having the event celebrated sumptuously.

Corney was allowed to have no voice in the matter. Mr. Conks was appointed master of the ceremonies, with a seat in the privy council, and night and day did that gentleman work to bring the thing off with *éclat*. All the neighbours were invited to dinner: all the servants at the Hall were invited: all the men employed on the farm were invited. The church clerk was invited, with all the children in the school which Sir John had founded; and while the gentlemen connected with the church orchestra had offered their services, the clergyman had signified his intention of being present in order to bless their repast.

Well! the auspicious morning dawned, and as early as four o'clock Sarah—assisted by aunt Ann—commenced dressing. She had everything new from head to foot—neat yet elegant; and being a handsome girl, and possessing a good figure, when she came down at seven o'clock and Corney saw her, he declared it to be his opinion that she was an angel indeed!

Sarah's mother—full of hope, joy, and pride—had been there two hours, and had got tea ready, which, however, was not to be considered the breakfast; and shortly afterwards Mr. Conks arrived, and then came the two bridesmaids from the Hall, and Corney made the ladies have a cup of tea each with “a little universal brandy in it;” and, at twenty minutes to eight precisely, the two flies, which Mr. Conks had engaged, dashed gallantly up to the gate.

Eight o'clock was the time appointed for them to be at the church. They therefore prepared to start immediately. The bride, with aunt Ann and one of the bridesmaids, entered the first fly, and Corney and his father, with the other bridesmaid and the master of the ceremonies, followed in the second.

On the road Corney made several efforts to be gay, but he didn't to any very great extent succeed: nor was Mr. Conks particularly facetious—the great responsibility of the office he had undertaken pressed so heavily upon his mind. The bridesmaid, however, was exceedingly merry, and chatted and laughed incessantly, until they arrived at the churchyard-gate, where they alighted, and Craske led the way up the path with the bride, followed by Corney and the bridesmaids, and aunt Ann leaning on the arm of Mr. Conks.

At the porch they were welcomed by the clerk with great respect, and in the vestry they were received by the minister with marked civility; and, when the necessary preliminaries had been gone through, then they slowly proceeded to the altar.

During the ceremony, Sarah was calm and firm, but Corney felt somewhat embarrassed. Aunt Ann wept, and so did her brother: vivid recollections of the past pressed upon them, and they thought of those whom they had lost, and with whom they had gone through the same sweet ceremony and before the same altar.

The tones of the minister were solemn and fervent, and his delivery had a most touching effect; and when, at the conclusion, he raised his eyes and saw how deeply Craske and his sister were affected, he, knowing the cause, took them kindly by the hand, and bade them to cherish the blessed hope of being reunited in heaven.

They then returned to the vestry and signed the register, and Mr. Conks—who, in addition to his other appointments, had been made the First Lord of the Treasury—did all that was necessary to be done, and that, too, in a liberal spirit; and when the minister had shaken hands with the bride and bridegroom, and had ascertained that they expected him to honour them with his presence at dinner, the party left the church and returned to their happy home.

Meanwhile Sarah's mother, with several assistants, had set out the breakfast—and such a breakfast! There was enough for fifty people, and more than enough; but that was of very little consequence then: the party sat down and enjoyed it highly, and the bridesmaids, determined on having some fun, undertook to fall desperately in love with Mr. Conks.

It had been some time previously proposed in the privy council—of which Mr. Conks was the president—and carried unanimously, that on this auspicious day, between breakfast and dinner, the bride, the bridegroom, and the bridesmaids should go for a ride; and as one of the flies had been detained in consequence, the fact was now publicly proclaimed. Sarah, however, although delighted with that—as she had been with every other proposition that had been made, wished to have a private interview with Corney first, and having found an opportunity of calling him aside, they went together into the garden.

“Cornelius, dear,” said Sarah, as she hung on his arm and looked at him with an expression of the most intense affection, “I now am yours—wholly yours—and all that I have is yours; and I shall pray continually to the Great Author of our being that we may be for ever happy. My person is yours; my heart is yours; that which I have in the bank is yours; and this is yours,” she added, as she drew a small packet from her bosom, “and I wish that it were twenty times the amount.”

“Why, what's this?” enquired Corney, as she placed the packet in his hand.

“You will find there, dear, the hundred pounds Sir John left me, and a cheque for thirty pounds, which I managed to save.”

Corney looked at her and felt that tears were springing into his eyes: he therefore walked on a little, and when he felt that he was able to keep them back, he said, “Sally, my sweet one, you're a dear good girl. The thirty pounds must still be yours. You'll be able, I've no doubt, to turn it to account. But with regard to the hundred,

I'll take that, and now I'll tell you why. I've thought a good deal about this hundred pounds: I thought of it all last night, for to tell you the truth I couldn't sleep last night at all."

"Nor could I, dear!"

"Well. Now listen. Your mother, my love, is very poor. We need not, between ourselves, mince the matter now: she is very, very poor. She has a little shop, but it isn't half filled: there isn't half things enough in it: and as I'm quite sure that she could do more good if she had a better stock, which she can't get just now, I've made up my mind to take the hundred of you and to give it to her to make the best she can of it."

"My dear love," said Sarah, with strong emotion, "your goodness overpowers me."

"There now, my love, come; we'll not have a tear about it. It's nothing but what's in nature right, and I'll allus do what's right if I know it."

"I know you will, dear; I'm sure that you will; but this is too kind."

"Sally, my love! it's impossible for a man to be too kind if he doesn't injure himself and family by his kindness. We don't want this money; she does; and she's your mother, and she shall have it! Take this cheque for the thirty pounds; the hundred I'll keep until I have an opportunity of putting it into her hands. I suppose that you got it from Mr. Cameron?"

"Yes, dear; I went to him yesterday, and he was kind enough to let me have it. But do keep the cheque, dear: I really have no use at all for the money."

"I'll have nothing whatever to do with it! We shall have a very desperate quarrel I see about this cheque if you don't take it back."

"What! quarrelling already!" cried Craske, who at this moment entered the garden. "Soul and bones, yow marn't quarrel yet! Yow haven't been married a couple o' hours!"

"We're not quarrelling," said Sarah, running up to him affectionately; "only he's *too* kind—much too kind."

"Let me hear yow say the same thing seven years hence, and I'll make yow a present of a good fat hog. But what ha' yow been cryin' about! Can't yow get on arout cryin'? What ha' yow got to cry for? Flesh alive! a weddin' day's not a day for cryin'!"

"I can't help it," said Sarah, "I'm so happy!"

"Do yow come along o' me: yow marn't be alone together. *We're* not goin' to have the business o' the day interrupted by tears! When are yow goin' to take the ladies out for a ride, sir?"

"I'm quite ready," replied Corney, who had been gazing at Sarah with feelings of admiration.

"Then tell 'em to get the horse in," said Craske, "while I send these womin people up to put their things on. *We* ain't a goin' to have any cryin' sich a day as this, it ain't quite so likely. Come along, my dear, let's go into the house." And drawing Sarah's arm within his, he led her in.

Sarah then retired with the bridesmaids to her chamber, and prepared to accompany Corney in the fly; and when they were ready, Corney handed them in, and they started with the strictest possible injunctions to be home by a quarter before two.

All hands now went to work to prepare dinner, and Mr. Conks, who had been promoted to another office—namely, that of head cook—borrowed one of aunt Ann's white aprons, and having taken off his coat, basted the beef, and kept all the pots boiling, and with corresponding diligence attended to the large plum puddings in the coppers. What they couldn't cook at home, they had entrusted to the baker, whose small oven was filled with ducks, chickens, joints, pies, and tarts; and while Craske was superintending the completion of an awning which had been roughly, yet safely, established in the paddock with larch-poles, stack-cloths, sacks, and tarpaulins, aunt Ann and her assistants were up to their necks in custards, jellies, syllabubs, and sauces.

At one o'clock precisely, Mr. Conks proceeded to bring in the tressels and planks, which, with admirable forethought, he had borrowed, knowing well that there were not sufficient tables for the purpose in the house. These he adjusted actively, yet calmly, into the similitude of a long dining-table, and laid the cloth, and as he couldn't find chairs enough, he sent for the highest forms in his school-room. But even then, he found the accommodation would not be sufficient. He expected forty people to dinner, and his plank table could not by any means accommodate more than six and twenty. He therefore established small tables in the corners of the room, and as he couldn't find table-cloths enough, he got a lot of clean towels and made them answer the purpose well.

Having completed these arrangements, he saw his way clearly—as far as the *real* dinner-party was concerned,—it having been decided, that the children should dine under the awning in the paddock; and proceeded to arrange the knives and forks which—as they belonged to all ages—he couldn't by any means match. He, however, found a sufficient number, and that was the grand point; and when he had placed on the table all the mugs and glasses he could find, he congratulated himself on his success.

About half-past one, the guests began to arrive, dressed in their best, and displaying white favours; and when the bride and bridegroom returned, they were hailed with delight by all present, who strewed the path which led from the gate to the house with flowers, and exclaimed in tones of fervour, "God bless you!"—"Heaven prosper you!"—"May the bright angels guard you!"—"May every happiness be yours!"

Aunt Ann now began to get fidgety. The clock was on the point of striking two, and the clergyman hadn't arrived! The baker had sent every thing home, and Mr. Conks with great presence of mind was basting the beef in order to keep it from burning. Scarcely, however, had the clock begun to strike, when the reverend gentleman rode up to the gate. This was a very great relief to aunt Ann, who—as

Corney went to receive him and to conduct him at once into the best room—ordered the beef to be taken up instantly, and by virtue of a minute division of labour—every one present being anxious to assist, the table was crowded in less than ten minutes, and dinner was formally announced.

The reverend gentleman came forth with the bride: and Corney followed with the bridesmaids; and when they had reached the seats which had been assigned to them, grace was most impressively said, and they went to work with every demonstration of delight.

There were no attendants on that occasion—no confusion, no running about. Every body was every body's servant, and all were anxious to assist each other; every thing required was on the table, and therefore all they had to do was to pass their plates for what they wanted.

This they did frequently—for there was not a soul there without an appetite; they all ate heartily and enjoyed themselves highly: and when Mr. Conks, who had accepted the office of head butler, saw that they had ceased to eat, he selected three females to assist him, and replaced the remains of the meat, chickens, ducks, and vegetables, with the plum puddings, pies, custards, syllabubs, and tarts, in admirable order, and with infinite dexterity and presence of mind.

Except, indeed, at the very head of the table, clean plates were not required; they therefore, without further ceremony, again went to work; and, knowing that plum pudding was to follow, each of them had left a little room for a slice, and when they had eaten literally all they *could* eat, Mr. Conks and his assistants, in the same perfect order and with the same dexterity which marked the remove, cleared the cloth.

The whole party then rose with the reverend gentleman, who offered up thanks to the Giver of all things, and immediately afterwards Mr. Conks and his assistants went to superintend the feast of the hungry children in the paddock.

Wine was then placed at the top of the table, and at the bottom stood a barrel of sound old beer; and when the reverend gentleman had conversed for some time with those around him, he rose to propose the health of the bride and bridegroom.

"My friends," said he, "it gives me pleasure to rise for the purpose of proposing the health of the two persons who have this day entered into the Holy State of Matrimony, and whose union we have met here to celebrate. They are known to you all: most of you have known them from their infancy, and I have known them for some years as the trustworthy servants of him whose sudden death we all deplore. I mention this, not with the view of casting even a momentary cloud over the innocent festivities of the day, but in order to shew that they who do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them are certain in some way to have their reward. They were faithful servants, and their master rewarded them, and if we be faithful servants of the Most High our Heavenly Master will reward *us*, both here and hereafter. If we serve Him diligently He will guide us

aright, and protect us, and bring us to His everlasting kingdom. My friends, I'll detain you no longer. You all join me, I know, in wishing health and happiness to the bride and bridegroom. [Cries of, "We do! We do! God bless them!"] May they live long in purity and holiness. May sweet Religion be their guiding-star, and when it shall please God to separate them on earth, may they part in the blessed conviction that they shall be reunited in heaven, where all He loves shall live again."

The whole party then rose and drank "Health and happiness to the bride and bridegroom." They knew not whether, after the speech, and in the presence of the reverend gentleman, they ought to applaud; but as they saw that the church clerk was prepared to act as fagleman, they gave three hearty cheers, and what was at that period of the world's history termed "a little un in."

When the rattling on Mr. Couks's borrowed planks, which succeeded these cheers, had subsided, Corney rose and looked pale as marble, and trembled like the leaf of the aspen, and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I ain't like a parliament man, nor I ain't like the reverend gentleman which has done me the honour to propose my good health, and likewise that of my dear little wife; I ain't therefore got the gift, you know, to say what I mean; but I mean what I feel, and if you knew my feelings—and I think you can pretty well guess what they are—you wouldn't want me to express 'em. [*Cheers.*] I'm married, and I'm come to live amongst you, and I mean to do nothing but what's right—[*bravo*]. And if every body here means as right as I mean, this 'll be one of the happiest parishes in Europe. [*Loud cheers*]. As for my little wife, she says she ain't much of a hand at a speech, and that I'm to thank you for her, and I do thank you for her: we both of us thank you for your universal wishes, and God bless you all!"

Tremendous cheers followed the conclusion of this speech, during which Corney resumed his seat; but he shortly afterwards rose again to propose the health of the reverend gentleman, who returned thanks briefly, and proposed the health of Craske.

This was the signal for unbounded applause, for Craske had been a good neighbour as well as a good master, and was highly respected by them all; and when he rose, his neighbours rose and gave him three cheers more, and it was not until the church clerk had sternly enjoined silence, that he was allowed to return thanks.

"Friends and nabburs," said he, when order had been restored, "it makes my heart glad to see yow all here enjoyin' yowrselves, and bein' comfortable and happy. I can't expect, in the natur' o' things, to be wi' yow many years longer, but whenever it may please God to call me, I shall leave one behind me which has a good heart, and which 'll do what's right and jest to all. [*Cheers.*] This is his weddin' day, and os quick does life pass, that it don't seem to me a very long time since it was *my* weddin' day. And thus we go over this Hill of Life: we begin at the bottom, climb up to the top, and then we go down o' the other side. We're born: we go to school: we're married: we have clildren; and then we make the best of our way into the grave; and

our children follow us, and their children follow them; and thus we go on, and on, and on. As regards yowr feelins towards me, I'm proud of 'em:—I'm proud o' yowr respect, and allus shall be, and as such, I drink all yowr very good healths."

When the loud applause which followed this speech had subsided, the reverend gentleman left his seat; and having exhorted them all to be "merry and wise," withdrew from the festive board. They all rose as he retired, and bowed with great respect, but not a soul there regretted his departure. He was not a proud man, nor was he austere: they believed him, moreover, to be a good man; but as they felt in his presence under a certain restraint, they were all very glad when he left.

"I say, governor," said Corney, "we shall have you putting up for a member of Parliament, if you go on making speeches like that!"

"Hold yowr rubbidge, bor, do," returned Craske. "I felt three-parts choked. I could hardly speak at all."

"Oh, but you came out universal! We're born and we're married, and then have children, and then make the best of our way to the grave, and our children follow us, and their children follow them, and thus they go on running after one another, and almost treading upon one another's heels! I suppose that's what you call the Human Race!"

"It's a fact, bor: we do—we sartney do: only I couldn't speak it right afore *him*."

"Well, now he's gone, what shall we be up to? Shall we have a dance—a universal dance? What do you say?"

"Oh, I should like it dearly!" cried one of the bridesmaids, who had scarcely said a word before the reverend gentleman, but who now began to chat again gaily. "I love a dance!"

"Then," said Corney, "we'll have one. But stop," he added, rising. "I've a universal duty to perform: I've to give you the health of my good old aunt, with three times three, and a little un in. She's a good sort—a capital out-and-out sort, and the best of it is, we all know it. There ain't a better hearted soul in this or any other county, and as such, we'll drink her good health with all the honours."

As the company rose, aunt Ann shed tears, and when they had given her "*all* the honours," she said in a tremulous voice, "God bless you!"

The bride then took the bridegroom's arm, and they led the way into the paddock, where they found nearly the whole of the children lying on the grass, and many of them fast asleep; for as Mr. Conks, in his capacity as superintendent of the Victualling Department, had allowed them all to eat as much beef and plum pudding as they pleased, they had eaten to absolute repletion.

The music, however, soon aroused them, and when partners had been engaged and brought to their places, the bride and bridegroom led off the dance.

Corney was not a very elegant dancer, but he was then far too happy to care about style: Sarah could dance very gracefully indeed, and

as she went down the middle and came up again, the guests exclaimed to each other, "She's really very pretty!" "How nicely she dances!" "Quite the lady!" "Dear me, what beautiful hair she has!" "What a nice set of teeth!" "What a sweet pretty foot!" "How happy she looks!" And she did look happy, and really felt happy—very happy—she could have wept, she was so happy!

Having seen every thing properly deposited, and made up the fire and put the kettles on, Mr. Conks in the plenitude of pure official pride joined Craske, who was smoking his pipe in the shade and enjoying the gay scene before him.

Mr. Conks was not, however, allowed to remain long there. He was no sooner seen beneath the awning, than one of the merry bridesmaids ran up to him gaily, and *insisted* upon his taking her down the next dance. In vain he declared that he *couldn't* dance—she'd teach him. In vain he entreated her to excuse him—she wouldn't! She had made up her mind to have him for a partner, and have him she would! Did he wan't to break her heart?

Certainly Mr. Conks was a widower. Had the late Mrs. Conks been alive, she would not have approved of it in all probability; but she was not; he felt at the time that she was not, and hence suffered himself to be led to the dance.

Aunt Ann was next importuned. Corney would dance with aunt Ann. Her repeated declaration that she should "on'y strain her lines," had no weight whatever with him. She *should* dance!—and did; and then Sarah attacked Craske, and by virtue of a little affectionate wheedling, carried him off! He, however, didn't last long; he managed to get to the bottom, and then retired from the contest, declaring that he wasn't long-winded enough. Sarah retired with him and refilled his pipe, and shortly afterwards Corney rejoined them and had all the boys marshalled before him, and told all who considered themselves fast runners to approach; whereupon they all approached, they all considered themselves fast runners, although they felt that they had eaten too much pudding to run fast then.

"Well," said Corney, "as you all come forward, you shall all start together. Go up to the palings, and the three that get in first, shall run for a shilling."

Mr. Conks was appointed starter, and the three first did run for a shilling; and then the three last ran, and then others were chosen, and when the races were over, dancing recommenced.

The hours flew! Why it was seven o'clock before aunt Ann thought of consulting Mr. Conks about the tea.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed; "why I'd no airthly notion of its being so late! I must go in, and get the tea ready at once!"

"Bless your soul," replied Mr. Conks, "that was ready two hours ago! The table's laid out, the bread and butter's cut, the water's boiling, and every thing's prepared; but I didn't like to mention a word about the time, because I saw you were all so happy."

"Mr. Conks," said aunt Ann, "I don't know how to thank yow for yowr kindness to-day."

"Now, don't say a word about it—not a word!"

"Aye! don't tell me! I ought to say a word, and a good many words too about it! Yowr attentions to-day have been so kind, I shall never forget 'em—I never shall."

"You don't know what pleasure I feel in paying those attentions! Why, I'm as happy as any man here—not excepting the bridegroom himself—because you have consulted me in all things, and placed unlimited confidence in my judgment."

"And so I'd a right to do," said aunt Ann. "Who else could ha' done what yow ha' done, and made every thing pass off so pleasant? I'd a right to place confidence in yowr judgment, and I say again, I shan't forget it."

"Well, if you don't want to make me uncomfortable, don't say a syllable more about the matter. Would you take tea now?"

"Yes, I think I'd better go in and make it at once."

"Don't you trouble yourself about any thing of the sort. Do you go back: I'll make the tea, and then come and publicly proclaim that it's ready. Only just let me have my way to-day, and you'll see how pleasantly things will pass off."

He then left her, and having made the tea, returned to the paddock with feelings of pride, and got his friend, the trumpeter, to sound—not an alarm—but what he termed the preliminary blasts of a proclamation, when the fact of the tea being ready *was* proclaimed, and aunt Ann taking her brother's arm, at once led the way into the house.

Mr. Conks remained behind. He had the children to attend to: the whole of whom assembled at his call and took their seats, when he produced a plum cake of no ordinary dimensions, and with a carving knife cut it into slices. Every child had a slice—and a large slice too, and then each had a glass of mild beer; and when he felt that he had done full justice to them all, he went into the house to have tea.

Aunt Ann, who knew what had detained him, passed a chicken to him immediately and part of a tongue, both of which he attacked and enjoyed, but nothing stronger than tea would he drink.

"When the business of the day has been done," said he to Craske, who kept continually pressing him to have a drop o' sussen, "I'll take a glass with you, and take a pipe with you with all the pleasure in life; but until I've carried out my scheme, I'll neither drink nor smoke."

Into every last cup—with the exception of that of Mr. Conks—aunt Ann put a quantity of rum, and the consequence was, that in a short time everybody was chatting to everybody, and nobody knew how to talk fast enough. Mr. Conks perceived this, and—having given an understood signal to the gentlemen connected with the ecclesiastical orchestra, he left the room, and they followed with their instruments; and when the children whom they had trained had assembled near the window, they sang the following hymn, composed for the occasion by one who had yet to announce himself as the author:—

Angels of Light! Angels of Light!
 Angels ever pure and fair:
 Angels of Light! Angels of Light!
 Hover o'er this happy pair.
 Before the Holy Altar they—
 Sweet Faith and Hope caressing—
 Invoked with fervent zeal to-day,
 Their Heavenly Father's blessing.

Long may they live! Long may they live
 In purity and peace and love!
 Long may they live! Long may they live!
 Deriving comfort from above.
 May honour guide him through a life
 Of tranquil hope and sweet reflection;
 May she who is his happy wife,
 Be cherished with sublime affection!

Blest may they be! Blest may they be!
 Rich in Faith and generous joy,
 Blest may they be! Blest may they be!
 Bliss be theirs without alloy!
 The choicest gifts bright Heaven bestows,
 Descend on them; and when they sever,
 May they meet again with those
 Who dwell in peace and love for ever!

Angels of Light! Angels of Light!
 Angels ever pure and fair:
 Angels of Light! Angels of Light!
 Hover o'er this happy pair!

The effect of this—coming so unexpectedly, and being set to a bold and rather startling tune—was electric! Craske shed tears copiously, and so did aunt Ann, while the thrilling sensations experienced by the rest were manifested strongly.

"Dear me, how beautiful!" exclaimed aunt Ann. "But I don't recollect seein' that in *our* hymn-book."

"No," said Mr. Conks, who had re-entered the room in order to witness the effect produced. "It is neither in that nor in any other hymn-book. I composed it myself for this happy occasion."

"Yow did!" cried aunt Ann, as she and the whole party gazed with an expression of wonder.

"I did, and Mr. Trillon, the trumpeter, set it to music."

"Dear me, though, how wonderful clever!—and how kind! I should dearly like to hear it sung again! Wouldn't yow, brother?"

"I could sit and hear it sung all night," replied Craske.

"Then it shall be sung again," said Mr. Conks, who immediately went to the door and gave the necessary instructions.

And it was sung again, not only with much feeling, but with spirit and precision, and the effect produced was even more powerful than before.

"Mr. Conks," said Corney, "I thank you for this kind mark of

friendship and good feeling. It's universal! and depend upon it I shan't forget it."

"Don't name it," said Mr. Conks modestly,—“don't name it. I never take a job in hand unless I know I can do it; but if I do take it in hand, it shall be done near the mark. This was part of my scheme of the day's entertainment; and as nothing now remains, as far as I am concerned, but to call upon my friends, the musicians, to sing us a few merry songs, I'll set down and smoke a pipe and have a glass with you, hoping that the proceedings of the day have given general satisfaction."

The conclusion of this brief speech was hailed with loud cheers, during which Mr. Conks took his seat near aunt Ann, and no prince on earth ever yet felt more proud.

"Mr. Conks," said Corney, "I ought not to trouble you, I know; but will you be kind enough to do me one more favour?"

"I'll do anything in life," replied Mr. Conks promptly.

"Then have the goodness to give the children sixpence a-piece, and send them all home with the exception of those which have friends here."

"I'll attend to it certainly," returned Mr. Conks. "But sixpence a-piece! There are nearly fifty of them!"

"This 'll cover it," said Corney, giving him a sovereign and a half. That 'll do for the lot."

"Yes," returned Mr. Conks thoughtfully: "here's capital enough: it's the simple distribution of that capital I look at! Where am I to find fifty sixpences in this peculiar corner of the kingdom?"

"True, I never thought of that; but you can tell 'em they *are* to have sixpence a-piece, and may have it by calling upon you to-morrow. That 'll answer their purpose, I dare say, as well. I don't suppose they want to make any investments to-night."

Mr. Conks immediately left the room again, and having accomplished the object of his mission, returned and filled his pipe and called for a song, which was sung, and which was followed by a variety of others until the clock struck eleven, when he proposed once more the health of the bride and bridegroom, which was the understood signal for the party to break up.

With many heartfelt expressions of thankfulness, the whole of the guests departed with the exception of the merry bridesmaids, who were to sleep there that night, and who very shortly afterwards stole away the bride; and at twelve o'clock precisely, Corney being then alone, they returned; but not with the bride! no: they returned with a candlestick and lighted candle in it, and smiled very archly, which was very remarkable: they didn't say why they smiled archly; nor did Corney ask them; he gave each of them a kiss, which really appeared to be nothing more than they had expected!—and when they had glanced at him again in a very peculiar manner they bade him good night, and retired.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GEORGE'S SECURITY.

ABOUT three weeks after the interesting event recorded in the preceding chapter, Dr. Farquar called upon George with the view of communicating that which he conceived would of course be considered pleasing intelligence.

"I have news for you," said he with a smile, "good news. Poor Jane has been confined: she was confined yesterday, and happily the child was still-born!"

"Still-born!" echoed George, with an expression of alarm. "Still-born?"

"Yes," replied the Doctor. "Are you not glad to hear it?"

"Well," returned George, who endeavoured to conceal his embarrassment, "perhaps it is but natural for a father to wish his child to live."

"But under the circumstances, its death is surely not to be lamented?"

"Well, perhaps it ought not to be. Is she doing well?"

"Yes: I understand she is getting on bravely."

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed the hypocrite, who in his heart of hearts wished that she had died with child,—“thank God for that! She was not confined at home?"

"No, at Yarmouth."

"At Yarmouth."

"Yes, her father had taken private lodgings for her there."

"And who has she to attend to her?"

"Freeman's sister-in-law."

"Well: I am happy to hear that *she* is out of danger. In what part of Yarmouth are her lodgings?"

"On the Terrace, I believe, near the Jetty."

"You don't know the number, I suppose?"

"No, I don't; but you could very soon ascertain that of her father. Freeman would tell you at once. You'll write to congratulate her, will you not?"

"I think I shall."

"Of course: for, notwithstanding what has occurred, she is an amiable girl, and I still hope to see you united."

"It will not be *my* fault if we are not united. I'm sure I did all that a man could do before this occurred to induce her to consent."

"I know that you did: but there is some mystery connected with her refusal which I can't at all fathom. You love each other—I know, at least, that she still loves you, and as far as pecuniary matters are concerned, you may be said to be on an equality; why then, should she have withheld her consent? The fact of her having refused you, Croly, under the then existing circumstances puzzled me completely, and puzzles me still."

"You must, I apprehend, ascribe it to wounded vanity," said George. "I repudiated her before my poor father's death, and now she, in consequence, repudiates me. It is a species of retaliation which may be called her revenge."

"Well," returned the Doctor, "you have both acted very unwisely; but if it be still your wish to marry her, you cannot do better than write to her now. A woman is never so susceptible of affection—she is never so grateful—as she is under these circumstances. Even the slightest attention inspires her with gratitude. Should the child be alive, she is eager to clasp it; but the very next object she pants to caress, is its father: should it be dead, the father is all in all."

"Then I'll get her address from Freeman, and write to her to-day."

Having conversed on a variety of other subjects, the Doctor left the Hall, when George knit his brows fiercely, and stood for a time motionless.

"Still-born," he at length muttered. "The chief security I had still-born. Had it lived, her lips would have been effectually sealed; but as it is, the only security I have is her love, which may at any time turn to hate. Had death struck her as well as the child, it would have been fortunate indeed! I'll get her address, and go down to Yarmouth: I shall then know how the land lies, and if a chance *should* present itself, I'll take advantage of it. I shall else be kept in a state of perpetual suspense. I *will*, if it be possible, free myself from this accursed thrall!"

He ordered his horse and went to call upon Freeman, whom he met near the house, and whose hand he shook warmly.

"Freeman," said he, "it has given me great pleasure to hear that which I have heard: Farquar has just informed me that Jane is doing well, and that the child was still-born."

"Thank God, she's doing finely!" returned Freeman; "and as for the child, it is perhaps better as it is."

"Infinitely better!—and you acted very wisely in taking her to Yarmouth, for now the affair will be known only to those who are anxious to conceal it. Now," he added, assuming an expression of earnestness, "it has been suggested by Dr. Farquar, that if I were to write to her just at this time, congratulating her on having escaped all danger, it might be the means of obtaining her forgiveness, for which I am still, and ever shall be, most anxious. What do you think?"

"It *might* have that effect," replied Freeman, cautiously. "Certainly it might have that effect!"

"I most sincerely hope that it will. Let me have her address, and I'll write to her to-day."

"I'll undertake to forward any note you may wish to send."

"It had better, I think, be sent from me direct?"

"Oh, that can make no sort of difference. I shall send to-night to let her know that I shall be with her to-morrow, and I can either enclose your note, or take it down with me."

"You have no objection, I hope, to give me her address?"

"Well," replied Freeman, feeling somewhat embarrassed, "I should have had no objection myself, had she not begged of me earnestly not to let you have it. I don't know why—I don't pretend to know why—but she certainly was most anxious to make me promise to conceal her address from you."

"Why, that's very extraordinary!"

"I thought so too; because, of course, you wouldn't dream of annoying her!"

"Dream of annoying her! The thought is monstrous! If I could in any way comfort her, I should indeed be happy. But she surely could not have imagined for a moment that I could have the heart to annoy her!"

"As I said before, I don't know why she was so anxious for me to make this promise: I only know that she *was* most anxious about it, and that the promise was made. But as far as your note is concerned, this of course can make no difference whatever. I'll either enclose it in mine to-night, or take it down with me in the morning."

"Very good," returned George. "Then I'll send it to you, and I do still hope that my entreaties and your good offices will bring about a reconciliation. You'll not make a very long stay, I suppose?"

"Oh no: I shall be back in a few days."

"Well, Freeman, when you return, I shall have a variety of suggestions to make having reference to your accommodation. You want a new barn: you also want a better place for your stock; but we'll go through the whole matter when you come back, and anything that I can do to afford you increased convenience shall be done."

"I'm obliged to you," said Freeman. "The alterations I require are not very extensive. By the bye, sir," he added, "you know, I believe, a gentleman named D'Almaine?"

"D'Almaine!" cried George, with a look of amazement. "I know a vagabond of that name! But—do you know anything of him?"

"When he was down here, he came and introduced himself to me, and pretended to fall desperately in love with my daughter."

"He did! Why the impudent scoundrel! She would not, of course, listen to him?"

"Oh yes, she did! In a mere sportive spirit she consented to have an interview with him, and when she questioned him on the subject of his means, he told her that he had an estate worth a thousand a-year!"

"The vagabond hasn't an estate worth a shilling! He gets his living entirely by swindling! *He* didn't want Jane: he wanted her annuity!"

"I think so too, and I'll tell you why. When Jane, in order to try him, alluded to this annuity, and told him that she wished it to be secured to me, she perceived a sudden change in his tone and manner, although he still declared that money was not his object.

"And that of course settled his love?"

"Well, it certainly may be said to have been a settlement of the

matter. He offered to get a bond drawn up, securing the annuity to me, and strongly urged the expediency of an immediate marriage."

"Aye, before the bond had been signed."

"Before the bond had been signed: and as she would not consent to this, we have heard no more of him."

"Of course not! that settled all. Why he's one of the most accomplished thieves in London!—a notorious blackleg!—a scoundrel of the most consummate caste!"

"Well, but isn't it extraordinary that Mr. Charles should associate with such a man? He said that he was a friend of Mr. Charles, and had enjoyed the friendship of Sir John for years."

"Of course he said so. And doubtless added that he was a friend of mine?"

"No, he spoke in disparagement of you. Mr. Charles was his friend: he cared nothing about you. He came down expressly in order to see Mr. Charles before he started for Italy, and appeared to regret that he had not arrived in time.

"The blackguard! I treated him civilly when he came, and allowed him to have the use of one of our horses, in consequence of his having told me the same tale; but directly I had discovered what he really was, I made the house too hot to hold him. He was very glad to get away any how. So great, indeed, was his haste to go, that he had the horse saddled, and galloped off, leaving behind him his carpet-bag, which he dare not even send for."

"But the horse has been returned, I hope?"

"Yes: he wouldn't run the risk of stealing that. That was sent back from Cambridge."

"Have you had the curiosity to examine the carpet-bag?"

"Yes; conceiving that there might be something in it which didn't belong to him, I had it ripped open, but I found nothing in it but some linen and a cheque-book."

"Did you notice that a cheque had been drawn for five pounds?"

"Yes, the only one that had been drawn."

"He gave that cheque to one of the maids."

"And did she get it cashed?"

"No, I took it for her when I went to market, but the answer at the bank was, 'No effects.'"

"The vagabond! The paltry scamp! His object, of course, was to induce you to believe that he was a wealthy man."

"Doubtless: but my Jane saw through it all more clearly than I could. She saw at once the object proposed by this extraordinary display of liberality. When he gave one of the men a crown for holding his horse, she had her suspicions; but when the girl showed her the cheque for five pounds she felt convinced."

"Well, if she really entertained any idea of having him, she has had a very fortunate escape; but do you think that if he had been all he represented himself to be, she would have married him?"

"No, I do not think that she would. She declared to me before she had this interview with him, that, in her view, the idea of his

proposing to her under the circumstances, was disgusting. Sport, as she confessed, was the only object she had in view: she wished to prove whether her conjectures were or were not correct."

"Well, she certainly went the right way to work to prove it. But don't you think, Freeman,—I speak to you as a friend, notwithstanding what has occurred—don't you think that a reconciliation between Jane and me may be eventually effected?"

"It may be," replied Freeman,—“certainly it may be.”

"I am sure that we should live very happily together, and as far as pecuniary matters are concerned, Charles, in consequence of my having undertaken to manage the estate, has insisted on making my income a thousand a year. Don't you think yourself that we had better be united?"

"Well, Mr. Croly," replied Freeman, "I have, of course, no absolute voice in the matter. Her resolution certainly appears at present to be firm; but time may do much: it may effect a change."

"I don't think that you are opposed to the match. From all that you have said to me on the subject, I infer that you had rather see us united than not. I may be wrong in drawing this inference, but I hope that I am right."

"Mr. Croly," said Freeman, "her happiness is the principal object I have in view, and all I can say on the subject is, that if she were to change her present determination—believing that you could live happily together—I should not offer the slightest opposition."

"Freeman, I am happy to find that I was right, and I feel myself justified in cherishing the hope that a reconciliation may yet be effected. I'll now go and write a note to her, and if you'll do me the favour to enclose it to night, [she'll have time to reflect upon its contents before you see her to-morrow."

"I'll enclose it certainly," said Freeman: "and should I find any change in her feelings on the subject, I'll send you word by the next post."

George thanked him and shook him very warmly by the hand, and having again expressed a hope that Jane's consent to their union might still be obtained, he left him, and rode towards the park.

"She suspects my real object," thought he. "Her address was to be studiously concealed from me: and why? Because she imagined that I should write to her? No: but because she feared that through some agency I might seal her lips for ever. This feeling of dread must be conquered; else, now that her child is gone, she will feel no longer justified in living in a state of perpetual apprehension. Either she or her fears must be removed, or I am lost. As Farquar suggested, she may, in her present position, be softened. I'll try it and await the result. I'll send her a note, which, if her heart be not completely seared, shall reach it, and at all events keep her love alive. Freeman is not opposed to our marriage; that's one point in my favour: nay, it is manifest that he is anxious for a reconciliation. This note will, however, decide it. Should she hold off now, it will then be quite clear that she'll hold off for ever. The idea of that fellow D'Al-

maine going there and pretending to fall desperately in love with her ! The vagabond ! But even this tells in my favour !—indeed, I shall write under a combination of circumstances favourable to my views ; and hence, if my note should fail to make an impression upon her, I shall relinquish all hope of getting her into my power by prevailing upon her to become my wife.”

On his return to the Hall, he proceeded to the library and wrote a note to her in the most touching strains of entreaty and endearment, and having sealed it, sent it immediately to Freeman.

The note was sent enclosed by that night's post, and in the morning Freeman went to see Jane, whom he found calm and firm, and infinitely stronger than he had expected.

“ My father,” said Jane, as he sat by her side, having gazed upon and kissed her again and again with the most profound affection, “ in your letter this morning, I found a note enclosed.”

“ Yes, my dear,” returned Freeman. “ I promised to enclose it, because he appeared to be ardently anxious to offer you his warm congratulations.”

“ You did not, I hope, father, send to him ? ”

“ No, my dear, no : he came to me—having heard all from Dr. Farquar—and really appeared to be delighted to hear that you were going on well. If that man, my dear, doesn't love you fondly, I am mistaken indeed ! ”

Jane slightly smiled ; but in an instant an expression of severity clouded her pale features : she soon, however, became calm again, and met her father's gaze with a look of sweet affection.

“ I heard of your *other* lover yesterday,” resumed Freeman, with a smile.

“ Indeed ! ” said Jane archly. “ I thought that I had lost him for ever ! ”

“ So you have, my dear, fortunately.”

“ Fortunately ! Am I then to infer that I was right in my conjecture ? ”

“ Right, my dear ! You were right as far as your conjecture went, but you didn't conjecture half enough ! Why, he is, I understand, one of the most accomplished swindlers in London !—a fellow who gets his living by swindling !—in short, a notorious vagabond.”

“ Well,” said Jane, “ a character of this description is not very flattering ; but from whom did you obtain it ? ”

“ I had it from George. D'Almaine's name was mentioned in the course of conversation, and then I ascertained all about him.”

“ But, if he knew the real character of this amiable person, how came he to associate with him ?—how came he to entertain him at the Hall ? ”

“ He treated him civilly, because he was told precisely the same tale as we were ; but as soon as he discovered what the fellow really was, he—to use his own expression—made the house too hot to hold him.”

“ I wonder,” said Jane, “ if that is true ! ”

"I've no doubt of it, my dear,—not the slightest. I'll tell you why. When the fellow found that all had been discovered, he was in such desperate haste to leave the Hall, that he started off at once and left his carpet-bag behind him, which George, conceiving that it might contain something which didn't legally belong to the gentleman, ripped open, and found a cheque-book, with one cheque only torn out, which, according to the margin, had been drawn for five pounds.

"Then that was the cheque he gave the girl!" said Jane. "Poor Charlotte! She was sadly cut up about that!"

"So you see," resumed Freeman, "there can be no doubt about the truth of George's statement."

"Did you tell him that this person pretended to be enamoured of me?"

"I did, and he was very indignant, and declared that all he was enamoured of was your annuity, and was anxious to know whether I thought that if this fellow had really been what he represented himself to be, you would have married him."

"And what did you say?"

"I told him I didn't think that you would, which appeared to afford him peculiar satisfaction, for he smiled and expressed a hope that a reconciliation might yet be effected. His income, I find, is a thousand a-year: Mr. Charles having insisted upon raising it to that amount, in consequence of George having undertaken the entire management of the estate. I suppose that he has written very affectionately, has he not?"

"Most likely: I didn't read the note. I saw that it came from him, and therefore had it placed in an envelope and sent back unopened."

"Sent back unopened, my dear!" cried Freeman. "Why that was a very harsh proceeding, was it not?"

"Why should I have opened it, dear father?" said Jane. "You know my determination well, and so does he! Why, then, by opening his notes should I induce him to believe that that determination can ever be changed?"

"Well, my dear, well!—you know best. I have no desire either to impugn your judgment, or to influence your feelings. Your happiness, my dear, as I told him, is the only object I have in view, and therefore the subject had better be dropped entirely, if you think that you could never live happily with him.

"I am *sure* that I never could!" replied Jane,—"*quite* sure of it! It has, in fact, been rendered impossible, Father," she added earnestly, yet cautiously, "you do not know all: if you did, you would applaud my resolution instead of doubting its wisdom or its prudence. You may, and doubtless *do*, think my conduct extraordinary: you may think my proceedings harsh and contemptuous: you may deem me unforgiving and unjust: but there is a secret, dear father, which must never be revealed—except, indeed, in the event of his death, and then only to you—a secret which, were it made known to you, would cause you to *curse* me—absolutely to curse me—if I ever consented to marry that man!"

"Jane, my dear," said Freeman, apprehensive that the energy she displayed might, under the circumstances, have a most injurious effect upon her, "we'll not pursue this subject. I am perfectly satisfied, my dear, with your decision, and therefore we'll say no more about it."

Jane pressed his hand and became calm again, and shortly afterwards Freeman left the room.

In the morning when George received his note back unopened, his indignation knew no bounds.

"This," he exclaimed,—“this only was required to prove that she is an untameable devil! I'll try no more!—I'll brave her scorn! All hope of propitiating her now is gone, and as I cannot draw her into my power thus, I must have recourse to other means of sealing her lips for ever! Not that I dread conviction now! I fear that far less than I fear the accusation which alone, without reference to proof, would blast the prospect I have in view. It is the accusation which must, if possible, be avoided, and it shall be avoided if it be but delayed a little longer. I shall catch her!—she shall not long escape! But come what may, I'll not go on cringing to her and fawning upon her, and being her most abject slave, when my only reward is her contumely: I'll not continue to sow servility and reap nothing but contempt. I'll not do it!—I must, however, still act with caution. I must *seem* to have a desire to propitiate her still. May the hour she saw me in the glade stand accursed! Would that I had known she was there:—she should not have lived to torture me with these apprehensions!”

For three days he drank hard, and dwelt upon the means by which he conceived that her destruction might with safety be accomplished; and when he heard that Freeman had returned to his farm, he assuming an expression of deep sorrow, went to see him.

"Well, Freeman," said he in melancholy tones, "how did you leave poor Jane?"

"Thank God," replied Freeman, "quite finely: she can't be going on better."

"I am happy to hear it—most happy to hear it."

"I am sorry," said Freeman, "that the note I enclosed was returned to you unopened."

"My feelings were deeply wounded, Freeman, but it must be borne."

"I scarcely need assure you that this was not done at my suggestion: the note had been posted before I arrived."

"I am satisfied on that point—perfectly satisfied. I believe that if you had arrived in time, you would at least have induced her to open and read it."

"I should have endeavoured to do so certainly, although I don't think that I should have succeeded. When I suggested that this was a somewhat harsh proceeding, her reply was, 'You know my determination, and so does he!—why then, by opening his notes, should I induce him to believe that that determination can ever be changed?' The fact is, Mr. Croly, she has resolutely made up her mind, and as I

don't believe that anything on earth can turn her, I would suggest to you the propriety of relinquishing all hope of prevailing upon her to become your wife. It appears that there is some secret between you—a secret which she says must never be revealed—except indeed in the event of your death, and then only to me. I don't know what it is; nor do I wish to know: but as I feel perfectly sure that any attempt to induce her to marry you must fail, I would earnestly advise you to abandon the thought."

"Freeman," said George, who felt inspired with new life, although he still wore an expression of sadness, "I'll consent to be guided by you. If you think that the attainment of my object is hopeless, I'll consent to abandon the pursuit."

"Do so," said Freeman, "let me beg of you to do so: never allude to the subject again."

"I have certainly done all that I could do, with the view of prevailing upon her to consent to our marriage; but as I have so signally failed, and as you assure me that I never can succeed, I'll act upon your advice. It will give me pain to do so, but that must be endured. My importunities may to her be a source of annoyance, and I cherish so strong an affection for her, that I wouldn't annoy her for the world."

"Then you'll cease to write to her."

"I will."

"And never again seek an interview with her, unless indeed her feelings should so far change as to render the interview mutually agreeable."

"I promise you that I never will."

"Mr. Croly, you have relieved me: you have relieved me from the pain of seeing one so dear to me act contemptuously in order to avoid importunities. I feel greatly relieved: I take your word; and now let us say no more about the matter."

The subject was dropped: and when they had conversed for some time about the various alterations suggested, George took his leave in high spirits, albeit apparently very much depressed.

"Good!" he exclaimed, as he rode away. "Excellent! The secret must *never* be revealed, except in the event of my death, and then only to him. *Very good!*—that 'll *do!* That's all I require! That's all I can wish for! And mark!—this was not said to lull my suspicions, to put me off my guard, or to inspire me with feelings of security. No! it was said to him, and solely as an excuse for her contemptuous treatment of me. It was never intended to reach *my* ears! She felt that her conduct must appear to him to be harsh and utterly unjustifiable, and hence she declared that there was something behind—a secret which must never be revealed except in the event of my death, and then only to him. Why need I then torture myself with apprehensions? What more can I hope for? I don't want *her*, nor do I want to run the risk of taking her life. I want only to be safe, and that I'm safe now I feel abundantly convinced."

Certainly Jane's declaration to her father was all that was required

to create in the mind of George a full conviction of his security. He did feel secure—perfectly secure; and from that day devoted all his energies to the completion and carrying into effect that scheme by which he proposed to accomplish his grand object, namely, that of working the estate into his own hands.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JULIANA AND CHARLES ARE UNITED.

So well did the cunningly devised scheme of George work, and so ample were the opportunities he had of plundering his brother, who had reposed the utmost confidence in him, that in less than twelve months from the time he commenced, he saw clearly that in the course of a few years he should be able to involve the estate, which was the first highly important step he had in contemplation.

He had broken up a very large portion of the park, and that, with the two adjoining farms, which he had teased and bribed the tenants to relinquish, he worked himself,—nominally for the advantage of Charles, but in reality with the view of robbing him continually.

The improvements, however, enabled him to “make the most money” during the first nine months; for having built in all directions and sold a large quantity of timber, his “pickings” from these sources, added to his charges for labour never performed, amounted to a very considerable sum. Still there were the improvements to show; and with these improvements Charles, on his return from Venice with Lejeune, Juliana, and the Widow, was delighted.

“Well,” said he, as he rode round with George the morning after his arrival, “you told me that you intended to make a variety of improvements, but I had no idea that in so short a time an estate could be so much improved as this has been.”

“I hope that I have not gone too far,” observed George.

“Not at all,” replied Charles, “not at all. I’m much pleased with the judgment you have displayed.”

“There is one thing,” said George, “I am afraid of: I am afraid that you will consider this to have been an expensive year.”

“Never mind that. The value of the estate has been in consequence enhanced. It must necessarily have been an expensive year; but we shall get over that.”

“The land which we have broken up will soon pay for all: that and the two adjoining farms will, in a year or two, increase your income considerably.”

“No doubt of it; but why did those persons leave their farms?”

“In the first place I don’t believe they had sufficient capital to work them, and as they never worked them well, I eventually consented to take them off their hands.”

"Very good. Then, of course, in order to work them properly, you'll require more money than you have now at your disposal."

"Yes, they cannot be carried on profitably without."

"Well; have what you want. We can easily raise it: have all you require. By the way, how is Cornelius getting on?"

"Remarkably well. He had an excellent start, and both he and his father are saving money."

"I am very glad to hear it. Will he ever make much of a farmer?"

"He'll do in a few years. He is very attentive and anxious to learn, and his father is equally anxious to teach him."

"That's right. Well, George, with all that you have done I am very highly pleased, and I have far more confidence in your judgment than ever."

This suited George exactly. The confidence of Charles, coupled with his willingness to "raise" whatever money might be required, extended that immediate field for plunder from which it was intended his ruin should spring. He knew nothing of rural matters, and was therefore most anxious to be guided by George, of whose integrity he had never entertained the slightest doubt.

Having surveyed nearly the whole of the estate, they returned to the Hall, and were joined by Lejeune, whose health had been much improved, and whose pecuniary circumstances were comparatively good, in consequence of a large number of shares which had been purchased for him by Richard, and which had been considered perfectly valueless, having been sold during his absence by his agent at a premium.

Juliana—who looked more beautiful than ever—was out at the time with the Widow, whose naturally happy countenance had assumed an almost settled expression of sadness.

"You do not appear to be in spirits, dear, this morning," said Juliana as they drove through their favourite avenue.

"I do not feel in very good spirits, my love," replied the Widow, who at once made an effort to smile.

"There! I love to see you happy!" exclaimed Juliana. "How cheerful we all were at Venice!"

"All around us there was gay, and every scene was new. The Present obtained the ascendancy there; but here, every object teems with recollections of the Past. I speak now with reference to myself. A thousand remembrances crowd upon me, and when they are of those whom we have loved and lost, they command the absence of gaiety."

"True, dear," replied Juliana, "very true; but how often have you explained to me—when in sadness I have thought of those whom I have loved and lost—that such thoughts ought not in sadness to be cherished? Recollect," she added cheerfully, "I am your pupil; and in order to show how attentive I have been, I'll repeat all the lessons you have taught me on this subject, unless you *immediately* smile and look happy."

Certainly the Widow *did* immediately smile, but she could not be

said to look happy. Juliana, with affectionate solicitude, endeavoured to divert her thoughts, and to some extent succeeded, but throughout the day her sadness was perceptible to all.

This, however, was not allowed to be in the ascendant long, for her presence at the Hall no sooner became known to those whom her refined conversation and elegant manners had so frequently charmed, than they flocked to congratulate her on her return, and formed parties to meet her, and made her feel how delighted they were to have her amongst them again. She had then a new field for the display of her brilliant conversational powers, and so vivid and seductive were her descriptions of the varied scenes she had witnessed, that she fired them with anxiety to visit "dear Italy,"—the mistress once, but still the Garden, of the world, in which—

"Whatever fruits in different climes are found,
That proudly rise or humbly court the ground;
Whatever blooms in torrid tracts appear,
Whose bright succession decks the varied year;
Whatever sweets salute the northern sky,
With vernal lives that blossom but to die;
These here disporting own the kindred soil,
Nor ask luxuriance from the planter's toil;
While sea-born gales their gelid wings expand,
To winnow fragrance round the smiling land."

At these parties Juliana was invariably present, and the Widow's appeals and references to her inspired her with so much confidence, that she soon began to display her natural eloquence without embarrassment or restraint.

Twelve months had elapsed since the death of Sir John; and Charles, who felt naturally anxious to be united to her whom he tenderly loved, and by whom he knew well that he was regarded with feelings amounting to those of adoration—resolved on suggesting the "inexpediency" of their regarding each other any longer as brother and sister merely.

Accordingly, embracing a very early opportunity, he quietly drew Juliana's arm in his, and led her across the lawn into an avenue which had been formed within the shrubbery, at the top of which Sir John had erected an exceedingly picturesque little grotto.

"Julie," said he, having led her to one of the rustic chairs in this beautiful retreat, "did you notice Miss Leland last evening?"

"Not particularly, dear," replied Juliana. "I conversed with her for some considerable time, but I noticed nothing extraordinary!"

"Indeed!" said Charles, assuming an expression of amazement. "Did you not notice that she looked very beautiful?"

"Miss Leland is a beautiful girl, and therefore the fact of her looking beautiful last evening cannot be deemed at all extraordinary!"

"Julie, I have fallen in love with Miss Leland."

"Desperately?" enquired Juliana with a smile.

"Desperately. I'm beginning to get very desperate now."

"Well!" said Juliana, "proceed, dear!—proceed! I know that you are going to say something very serious!"

"How is it possible for you to know that?"

"Oh! I feel convinced of it!"

"What has convinced you?"

"The fact of your having commenced with a jest."

"Do you call it a jest to fall desperately in love with so beautiful a girl as Miss Leland?"

"I know you, Charles, dear, well enough to know that you have something to say which has not the slightest reference to Miss Leland."

"Well!—all I have to say is this: that unless you secure me, and that at once, I shall in all probability do something desperate. But stop!—I have to ask one highly important question. Do you *love* me as well as you did twelve months ago?"

Juliana smiled and blushed, and playfully patted his cheek.

"Because," continued Charles, "if you really do not, I had better at once speak to Miss Leland!"

"What *have* you to say?" enquired Juliana archly. "I do not believe that you have said a single word yet of that which you really intended to say. What is it?"

"Julie," said Charles, as he took her hand, "your name is Lejeune—Miss Lejeune. Mr. Lejeune is all very well, but I don't like the sound of Miss Lejeune! Mrs. Charles Croly would sound much better, and therefore I wish you to change it at once."

"I thought that the beauty of Miss Leland would lead to something!"

"There is the church," continued Charles. "It is certainly a small church, but quite large enough, my love, for us to be married in; and therefore the only question is, when shall we be married at that church?"

"Well," replied Juliana, who felt somewhat tremulous even then: "Perhaps Mrs. Wardle had better be consulted."

"Well, my love. Then consult Mrs. Wardle, but don't think of naming any distant day! I shall require but a very short notice, therefore don't be at all apprehensive of taking me by storm. There is, however, one thing more that I wish to name. Mrs. Wardle—whose amiable character we cannot too highly appreciate, and whom I love somewhat more than I love Miss Leland, because I know that she dearly loves you—has a son, as you are aware, in the Church. I have not had the pleasure of seeing him for years; but I *should* like, in order to show how highly we esteem Mrs. Wardle, to have our marriage ceremony performed by her son."

"Dear Charles," said Juliana, with a look of intense affection, "you are ever considerate—ever most kind. The proposition delights me because I know that it will not fail to delight her. The clergyman connected with the church, dear, will not, I hope, consider himself slighted in consequence?"

"Oh dear me, no, not at all! If even he were a perfect stranger to the family, there would be no difficulty at all about the matter; but this gentleman is a friend of Mrs. Wardle: he succeeded her husband

and knows her son well. There she is;" he added, pointing through the shrubbery. "Shall I go and bring her in?"

"Yes, do, dear," replied Juliana, "and then we can speak to her on the subject at once."

Charles accordingly rose, and left the avenue, and soon re-appeared with the Widow on his arm.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Widow playfully, as she approached. "This, then, is your favourite hiding-place! Certainly I might have guessed that you were here; but I have been endeavouring to find you in the garden!"

"The garden," said Charles, as he led her to a seat, "is not sufficiently retired for one who is so anxious to change her name as this little creature is."

"Charles, dear!" exclaimed Juliana.

"I'll tell you all about it," continued Charles playfully. "She is tired of being called Miss Lejeune. It has therefore been decided that her name shall be changed, and that almost immediately, provided you consent to send for one particular clergyman."

"It was his own suggestion," interposed Juliana, "although I am quite delighted with it."

"The fact is," resumed Charles, "she has really become so fastidious, that it isn't every clergyman connected with the Church of England that will suit her! She must have a particular clergymen to perform the marriage ceremony, and the one selected is—your son."

Tears sprang into the Widow's eyes as she said, "I understand and appreciate your motive."

"Well," said Charles gaily, with the view of subduing her emotion, "how is he situated? Can he conveniently come soon? I hope that he can, because of course little Julie's in haste."

"My dearest love!" cried Juliana.

"Don't be alarmed, my dear," said the Widow. "I perfectly well understand him."

"Well," resumed Charles, addressing the Widow, "will you, or shall I, write to beg of him to come down immediately."

"Not immediately, dear!" said Juliana.

"Oh yes, immediately! If even our marriage be delayed for a week, we shall all be most happy to entertain him; and I don't believe that he would hesitate to do us this favour."

"Hesitate!" exclaimed the Widow. "It would be a source of joy to him! Gratitude alone—"

"Pardon me," said Charles, interrupting her promptly, "we don't want to hear a single word about gratitude. Will you, or shall I, write to him to-day? Perhaps you had better write."

"I will do so with pleasure."

"Very well: then that's settled; but as there is something else to be settled between you and Julie, I'll leave you for a time. I'll go and name the subject to Mr. Lejeune, and return in—what shall I say?—ten minutes."

"Ten minutes!" exclaimed Juliana.

"Yes," returned Charles; "I'll even be so liberal as to give you *ten* minutes to decide."

The Widow smiled as he left them, and Juliana blushed; but they very soon settled the matter between them, and Charles on his return was informed by the Widow that they should be happy to accompany him to church that day week.

This met the views of Charles precisely, and while the Widow was writing to her son, and Juliana was conversing with her father on the subject, he communicated the fact to George, who, being anxious to plunder him in every possible way, proposed a *fête* on the occasion, and offered to undertake the entire management of it. The *fête*, however, which George contemplated, and out of which he calculated on "picking" at least two hundred pounds, was, after a consultation with the Widow and Lejeune, set aside. The neighbouring gentry were to be invited to breakfast: the farmers and their friends were to be invited to dinner, and the poor were to be regaled in the avenue described with roast-beef, plum-pudding, and ale.

"Well," thought George, when this decision had been announced, "I shall be able to pick something even out of this! I shall be able to manage at least a hundred, and every hundred tells. A hundred! Stop! I can make up the two. He doesn't know what wine we have in the cellar. I'll order a lot: I can have it sold again, and the date of the bill will show when it was purchased. I'll not let a single chance escape me. Hundreds soon amount to thousands and thousands will soon swallow up the estate. The accumulation of money is my object, and money I'll accumulate by all possible means. Anything ranging from five to five hundred, I'll secure. *He* knows no more what he's worth than a child: nor shall he ever know—until he's worth nothing. And is not a man who has been robbed as I have been, justified in getting his property back if possible? I am by nature entitled to the estate, and, although I have been robbed of it, yet will I have it, and the end will, under the circumstances, justify the means.

On the following evening, the Widow's son arrived, and a graceful, quiet, gentlemanly fellow he was. He looked, indeed, as if he had diligently "worked," but his originally fine constitution was unimpaired, while his brilliant and expressive eye indicated clearly the existence of a combination of intelligence and health.

That the Widow was proud of him, is a fact which need not be recorded—nor need it be stated that he was proud of her; but they were all pleased with him with the exception of George, who, being himself a hypocrite, imagined that hypocrisy formed the chief characteristic of all who appeared to have a deep veneration for religion.

Charles fancied that George and Wardle would suit each other admirably—having a high opinion of George's piety, and believing his faith to be pure; but in this he was mistaken, for while Wardle clearly perceived that there was something beneath the surface of George's "piety," George had a contempt—a secret contempt—for what he termed when alone "those superstitious views which prompt men to allow faith to supplant reason."

This absence of congeniality between the sentiments of Wardle and George did not, however, interfere at all with the pleasures of the week which preceded the marriage. That week was spent gaily, and when the day arrived, the whole party appeared to be in a state of perfect rapture.

They went to church at the time appointed, and the ceremony was performed in a most impressive manner, and so delighted was Lejeune with young Wardle, and so highly did he appreciate his amiable mother's worth, that, on their return to the Hall, he placed in his hand a cheque for a thousand pounds, and begged of him to say nothing about it.

A thousand pounds to a man like Wardle—he being at the time but a very poor curate—was a fortune! He hardly knew how to receive it—nay, he knew not whether he ought to receive it or not; but he did receive it, and his heart was so full, that when Lejeune forced it upon him he had not the power to thank him.

After breakfast, which had been prepared in a style of surpassing magnificence, Sir Frederick Locke, the high sheriff of the county, proposed the health of the bride and bridegroom, which was drank with great enthusiasm, and acknowledged in a graceful manner by Charles, whose easy eloquence and manly bearing inspired them all with admiration.

A more practised speaker and a far more eloquent man then rose with his heart full of joy and pride, to propose the health of the Widow Wardle. There was nothing in his appearance as he presented himself to indicate the possession of the highest and most brilliant order of intellect. He was a prematurely old man—a man upon whose once handsome features affliction had deeply marked its progress, and the guests would have thought, as he rose, but little of him had he not been the father of the bride. But when, after a tranquil exordium he began to pour his eloquence into their hearts,—the eloquence of nature, of love, truth, benevolence, and gratitude to Him who had spared one dear daughter out of four, to love, to bless, and to comfort him,—they were electrified! There was not a dry eye to be seen. They all wept, some of them convulsively; but as he proceeded to describe the admirable characteristics of the bridegroom, and to touch upon the unassuming virtues of the bride, they applauded him with rapture; and when he had portrayed the bright prospect of happiness which opened before them, the guests rose *en masse*, and while the gentlemen cheered, the ladies waved their handkerchiefs gallantly, and smiled notwithstanding their tears.

"But," he added calmly, "I have been to a very serious extent digressing. I rose for the purpose of proposing to you the health of our dear and intelligent friend, Mrs. Wardle, whom we all very highly esteem—whose talents are brilliant and refined—whose heart I believe to be as pure as that of an infant, and who is in the most sublime sense of the term a woman! And now," he continued, assuming an expression of gaiety, "I'll tell you a little anecdote. Twelve months ago our friend Charles and Juliana were to have been married. I'll not dwell upon anything calculated to cast even a temporary cloud over

the brightness of this day ; but twelve months ago, they were to have been married. Well ! I then commissioned Charles to order a service of plate to be presented on the occasion to her who had regarded my child with the most affectionate solicitude. That service of plate is on the sideboard now, and—not with a view to the gratification of any feeling of vanity, for the days of vanity with me are past—but in order to show how much I admire the soundness of her pure woman's heart—I call upon my daughter to present her with that which, however, inconsiderable its intrinsic value may be, will mark my sense of her virtues. God bless her !”

Juliana, who turned pale as death on being placed in this novel position, looked at the Widow, who was in tears, and then looked at Charles, who said privately, “Be calm, Julie!—calm !” and having selected a magnificent candelabra, he placed it before her, and added, “All that you have to do, is to present her with this as a part of the service in the name of your papa.”

Juliana rose and kissed the Widow passionately, and said : “Papa presents you, dear, with this service of plate as a mark of his esteem.”

Wardle, whose feelings completely overwhelmed him, rose with the view of returning thanks for the Widow in an elegant speech ; but he could make nothing of it : his heart was too full : all present perceived his embarrassment, and looked at what he really meant, more than at what he really said.

The health of Lejeune, having been proposed by the High Sheriff, and responded to briefly, the ladies withdrew, and soon afterwards Charles and his beautiful bride with the Widow and one of the bridesmaids, departed with the view of passing the honeymoon at Chadacre Hall—the seat of a very old friend of Sir John, leaving the rest to the management of that wretch George.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CONCLUSION.

OF life, and life's vicissitudes, D'Almaine, during the year that had elapsed since his sudden departure from the Hall, had experienced more than accorded with his strictly private notions of felicity. Having lost his two hundred and fifty pounds in one night, through the imperfect working of a scheme designed to swindle those whom he played with, he was reduced to a state of destitution, and through his efforts to recover himself, was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and hard labour, for obtaining goods under fraudulent pretences.

This imprisonment did not improve his morals. During its term, he became acquainted with villains of every caste—villains who boasted of their villany, and who, in order to gain the applause of the “world” in which they lived, endeavoured to outvie each other ; but those with

whom he was on the most friendly terms were two burglars, who had been convicted of a petty offence at the same sessions, and sentenced to undergo the same term of imprisonment which they cared for no more than a gentleman cares about retiring for six months to his country seat, seeing that while there they perfected their schemes with clear heads, which could scarcely be hoped for in the midst of their ordinary scenes of dissipation.

These interesting individuals—one of whom rejoiced in the *sobriquet* of the “Lily,” on account of his extremely dark complexion; while the other had been “gifted” with the name of the “Tulip,” as a compliment to his varied excellences—took a fancy to D’Almaine, conceiving that his appearance and talent might be turned to a profitable account.

Accordingly, on being let loose from that which is still very facetiously termed, “The House of Correction,” they repaired to a public-house at the corner of Liquorpond-street, with D’Almaine, nominally in order to regale themselves, but in reality, with the view of inducing him to join them.

“Well,” said the Lily, “now we’re out what are we to be up to? We must do something! I should like to know of a tidyish crib that we could crack, and be respectable.”

“That cracking business is rather dangerous work,” said D’Almaine, “is it not?”

“Dangerous! Not a bit of it, unless you like to make it so. It’s the best game played. You enter; you get a decent haul. You sell it, pocket the money, and live like a gentleman.”

“But the risk is very great?”

“There’s a risk in all things. Nothing can be done without risk. Life’s made up of a parcel of risks which musn’t be taken at all into account. You never had a go-in, I suppose?”

“Never in that way.”

“Then you should try. Only try it once, and you’d never think of sticking to any thing else. You don’t happen to know of an out-and-out place where we could find such a thing as a lot of plate, do you?”

“Well, I certainly know of one,” replied D’Almaine, “but that’s between sixty and seventy miles off.”

“Never mind the distance. The further off the better. Do you know the go of the premises?”

“Well: I lived in the house a few days about twelve months ago.”

“That ’ll do! There’s plenty there?”

“There is.”

“Then will you go? You’ll never regret it the longest day you live.”

“Well,” replied D’Almaine thoughtfully, “I must do something: I’ll think of it: I’ll turn the matter over in my mind.”

“It’s no use thinking about it,” cried the Lily, “nor no use turning it over in your mind. A thing that’s done at once is done well.”

Dilly-dallying makes a man a coward. If you say you'll go, I'll get the money to start with, and send the Tulip at once for the tools.

"Well," replied D'Almaine, "let us have something to eat and I'll consider."

Chops were ordered, and he did consider, and after a display of persuasive eloquence on the part of the Lily, he consented to join them.

It was then proposed that no time should be lost; that they should go by the first coach to Newmarket, and that the work should be done that night; and when the money and the implements had been procured they started, and reached Newmarket in the early part of the evening.

Here they hired a horse and gig—nominally to go to Bury Saint Edmunds; but they went on the high road only as far as the Cock at Kentford, where they remained until eleven o'clock at night, and then started for the Hall.

The place was of course well known to D'Almaine: no time was therefore lost in reconnoitering; and when the horse had been secured to the park palings, they went to the back of the house, and easily effected an entrance.

D'Almaine knew that the plate-chest used to be kept in George's room, and conceiving that it was kept there then, he led them towards it; and as he warned them that George was a powerful fellow, and would annihilate them all if they gave him the slightest chance, they decided on bursting into his room—conceiving of course that he was in bed—and securing him at once.

They therefore put on their masks and proceeded to his room, and having forced the door, they were amazed on discovering him smoking a cigar in his easy chair, with a glass of brandy and water before him,

As they entered, he started with a look of defiance. They, however, rushed upon him on the instant, and having forced him to the ground, demanded the key of the plate-chest. In that chest, George had nearly ten thousand pounds. He was therefore unwilling to give up the key, but said that he would do so, if they would allow him to rise. They consented, and in an instant, he turned and knocked down both the Lily and the Tulip.

"Leg him, Dal, leg him!" cried the Lily, "and hold him down!"

"D'Almaine!" exclaimed George, who although the mask had fallen off didn't recognize his friend, so cleverly had he been cropped and shaved,—“D'Almaine!”

"Aye," replied D'Almaine, "and now that you know me, it will not be safe to allow you to live."

"Gusty!" cried George, "don't kill me: take what there is, but I'm not fit to die."

"Let the gentleman say his prayers," said the Lily. "By all manner of means, let the gentleman say his prayers!"

George instinctively knelt, but perceiving a chance, he rose, and knocked down D'Almaine, and seizing his companions by the throat, would have strangled them, had not D'Almaine drawn a pistol from

his breast and shot him as he imagined through the heart, just as the servants, whom the noise had alarmed, entered the room.

George fell, and James knowing that a carbine was loaded in the room, got it down in an instant, and shot D'Almaine dead, when George rose again and rushed upon the burglars, who inflicted upon him several frightful wounds, but he struggled with them still, and having wrested their knives from them, he stabbed them both to the heart, and fell over them senseless.

Dr. Farquar was immediately sent for, and found George in a state of intense agony. He endeavoured of course to alleviate his sufferings, but found it impossible to do so. George was dreadfully wounded : he was tortured to madness, and raved with maniacal vehemence, and continued to rave throughout the night, and during the whole of the following day ; and Charles, who had been sent for, returned just in time to witness the dying agonies of the STEWARD.

THE END.





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